



NORMANDIE ALLEMAN
BOUND
BY THE
BUCCANEER

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By

Normandie Alleman

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This book is intended for *adults only*. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults.

Chapter One

“You love knowing I can’t escape, don’t you? That I’m all yours,” Frederica teased, tugging at the restraints that bound her wrists to the bed.

Gaston raised a brow to her. “And what if I do?” He asked, untying the ropes from her wrists. “You know how much it excites me to see you all bound and helpless. Don’t you like being my own personal little whore?” Mischief danced in his visible brown eye. The other, injured in battle, hid behind a black patch.

Lazing on her back upon their cot, she touched a finger to her lips and rolled her eyes in mock consideration.

Before she had a chance to answer his rather rhetorical question, he pounced on her. His weight upon her gave her a feeling of warmth and security she felt at no other time than when lying under him.

“Liar,” he whispered into her ear, his mouth trailing down her neck. “Tell me how much you love it.” Then he proceeded to tickle her ribs which sent her into a gale of giggles.

“Must I resort to the gag again?” He waved a red kerchief in the air playfully.

Her laughter made it difficult to speak. “Yes, yes, I love it.” Her voice reached a high-pitched squeal.

He ceased the tickling and sensually covered her mouth with his hand. “You must remain quiet or I will be forced to quiet you.” With each word his mouth traveled lower on her body, accentuating every word with a kiss.

Gaston hated for her to be too loud during their lovemaking. He worried that if the crew heard them, it would cause trouble. It wasn’t exactly fair for the Captain to be the only man aboard with a woman to bed every night. It was unclear to her whether he was more worried the pirates would rape her, or if he feared they would stage a mutiny of his leadership, or both. Either was a potential problem if the men grew irritable enough.

So she tried to be quiet, but it was difficult considering the way Gaston brought her to such heights of ecstasy. Though she’d been a virgin when they met, and therefore inexperienced, she had no doubt he had talents in the bedroom that exceeded those of most men.

All he had to do was look at her a certain way, and Frederica’s body responded to him. His kisses awakened a fire inside her that only he could douse. “I know how you can keep my mouth quiet,” she breathed huskily.

“And how is that?” Their words took on the slow, sensual tone of foreplay.

“Put something in it.” She slid his finger into her mouth and sucked on it lazily, her eyes growing heavy with lust.

He got up and stood beside the bed. “Something like this?” He asked, sliding his erection between her eager lips.

She nodded imperceptibly and took him deep into her mouth, relishing the taste of him. He reached down and folded her toward him, giving him access to her ass.

Smack! Smack! The sound of his slaps to her bottom filled the room, her skin smarted, and she whimpered under his hand.

Such noises were acceptable. The racket coming from the Captain’s room that resulted from a man smacking his woman wouldn’t cause any of the crew members to think twice.

But Gaston had trained Frederica to enjoy his spankings, almost to crave them. He’d taught her to appreciate the connection between pleasure and pain. The blood rushing to the surface of her skin made her more sensitive to being touched and also increased the intensity of the experience. The painful activities aroused her because she knew her pleasure would follow.

There had even been times when Gaston had worked her body into such a state that she seemed to fall away into a dream world. He’d told her once that she seemed to crave that state like those with a laudanum addiction craved the drug.

Now, as he choked her with his thick cock while he spanked her ass, she found utter contentment in him manhandling her body. She loved for him to use her for his pleasure, and it was easy to submit to his will because he always made her own satisfaction the highest priority. Her trust in him was absolute.

He had saved her life when Humphrey, Captain of the *Neptune’s Damnation*, had forced them to walk the plank. She would never have survived those next two days lost at sea had it not been for Gaston. In one swift movement he withdrew from her mouth and flipped her over onto her backside.

Her sore bottom hit the less-than-cushy bunk that served as their bed. “Ouch!” she complained.

He laughed, covering her body with his. “Come now. It’s not that bad is it?” His lips nipped her flesh just above the collarbone, sending currents or excitement into her extremities.

She giggled. “Okay, maybe not that bad.”

Rising to his knees he lifted her legs by the ankles and caressed the hot globes of her ass. She imagined they were warm to the touch, as they were more sensitive after the spanking, though it had been more erotic than punitive in nature.

He pulled her to him, and she assisted by crossing her ankles behind his neck as he entered her. The angle made the fucking all the

more intense and she had to bite her finger to keep from screaming.

With a glimmer in his eye he handed her the kerchief. "In your mouth," he snarled.

Relieved to have something to bite down on, she eagerly complied, stuffing most of the cloth in her mouth. Before Gaston had thought to gag her, she'd once made her own lip swollen by biting down on the inside of it during a particularly intense orgasm. Now she was free to bite and even cry out because the gag muffled her cries. This helped free her and allow her to enjoy every sensation she experienced during their time together.

Gaston ground his hips into her and his cock hit the front wall of her pussy with great force. He pulled out slowly then thrust hard, repeating the pattern which stimulated her core. The delicious pummeling made the muscles of her cunt clench around him, and she threw her head from side to side, taking the intense pleasure he gave her.

The banging against her sensitive spot felt divine, and she tensed her whole body, preparing for it to take flight. Push after push and then she fell away. Broken shards of ecstasy shattered through her body, filling her with a peace only Gaston could bring her.

Moments later, with a slight catch of his breath, he stilled and she felt his seed seep into her depths. Her legs were cramped by now, and it felt nice when he untangled them from his neck and set them down gently on the bunk.

"You are quite a useful little slave," he teased, wrapping her up in his arms.

"And you are quite a benevolent master," she flirted back. Although they joked about her being his slave and in some ways she behaved as such, they both knew that with her independent nature, her gift of submission to him could be revoked at any time. But Frederica was happy with their arrangement. She made herself available to him sexually, and he offered her a life of adventure under his care and protection. In her mind she had everything she could want.

They lay in each other's arms, breathing in unison until a sharp rap at the door disturbed them. Gaston jumped up, and Frederica pulled the covers over herself modestly, the habits instilled in her by her genteel upbringing stayed with her even on a pirate ship far, far away from her motherland of England.

"Capt'n," the quartermaster's voice rang out from the other side of the door.

Gaston cracked it open an inch, "Yes?"

"Looks like we're about a day away from the meet in the Nassau."

"Aye. I'll be up top in a moment to give orders. Prepare the men."

“Aye, Aye Capt’n.”

Gaston turned and favored Frederica with a look of deep affection. “My apologies, my dear,” he sighed. “Duty calls. Will I see you up on deck later?” He pulled on his breeches and threw on a white shirt followed by his long crimson waistcoat with the gold buttons. Handsome as always, she noticed a crease in his forehead that had become more pronounced as of late. His worries about the Ocean’s Knave’s vulnerable position was taking a toll.

“Yes. I must attend to my patients first, and then I’ll join you. Hatch said he’d teach me some lessons today.”

He eyed her suspiciously. “What have you and Hatch cooked up?” he asked pulling on his boots.

“It’s a surprise so never you mind,” she said, shooing him away.

“I’m going. I’m going.” He put his arms through the sleeves of his jacket and picked up his three-cornered hat, the one festooned with an enormous purple feather jutting out behind it. His hair hung in dreadlocks down his back, and his features were angled so distinctly they could have been carved from stone.

Frederica bit back a smile. Gaston’s attire was outlandish; garish even by pirate standards, but his flamboyant, slightly arrogant nature was one of the things she loved about him. The black patch that covered his injured eye gave him an air of mystery that made him appear all the more rakish and alluring.

He stopped to grant her a formal bow, which made her giggle. Then he blew her a kiss as he closed the door behind him.

She sat up in bed and hugged her knees to her chest. She was grateful that Gaston had taken her feelings into account when she’d told him that as much as she loved the adventurous part of being a pirate, she didn’t relish harming innocent people, especially since she herself had once been the victim of blood-thirsty pirates.

Two and a half years ago she had embarked on the *Adelaide* in England with her companion, Cassandra, on a voyage bound for the American Colonies in the New World. Having always been a spirited girl, Frederica longed for adventure, and so when her parents had passed away and left her with nothing, she had decided to travel to America. Her friend Cassandra and she had planned to find work as governesses in the colonies, but a month into their voyage, the *Adelaide* had been attacked by a ship known as the *Neptune’s Damnation*, sailing under the dreaded “jolie rouge.” The ship’s red flag had boasted the symbol of an hourglass, an indication to other ships that their time had run out and they would be shown no mercy.

When the *Adelaide* came under attack, Frederica had watched in terror as many of her fellow passengers were murdered. As the carnage unfolded around her, something hit her in the head, and the

next thing she knew she had awakened aboard the conquering ship, a captive of its commander, Captain Humphrey.

Frederica shuddered at the thought of Humphrey and all he had done to her.

Then, a few weeks into her imprisonment aboard the *Neptune's Damnation*, the crew had found Gaston floating along on a piece of refuse and they had hauled him onto the ship. Soon Gaston and Frederica found themselves on Captain Humphrey's bad side and they had been forced to walk the plank. If it not for Gaston, she would surely have perished.

Later, Gaston had reunited with his crew and Frederica had needled her way into coming aboard as well, convincing him that the medical knowledge she'd garnered from her father would prove helpful to Gaston and his men.

Not long after she joined the crew, she told Gaston of her misgivings about attacking innocent people, and he'd laughed at her and asked her with a wry smile what she suggested they do instead. She had proposed that they rob only other pirates.

After an initial snort of derision, Gaston had paced the room as they discussed the possibilities of her idea. The upside was that often pirate ships were already loaded with treasure they'd intercepted. When the ships were full of plunder they were weighted down. This took away the pirate's speed and made them easy targets.

After a few test runs operating under the new plan, they found that not only could they spare the lives of seafaring innocents, which was Frederica's concern, but they also found that their fellow pirates were relatively easy pickings and offered them great financial reward, which appealed to Gaston's and the crew's sensibilities.

The downside was that they had made enemies with some of the most dangerous, cut-throat bandits in the Caribbean, and this had her and Gaston worried.

Shaking her head in a futile attempt to dislodge the concerns that resided there, she stood up lazily and stretched like a kitten in a sunny spot. Ambling over to her trunks, she focused on the business of getting dressed.

She liked taking her time to choose what to wear, because it was one of the few girlish pleasures in her distinctly masculine world. She'd earned many gold doubloons along the way pirating, but Gaston had been generous with her, too. He liked to spoil her, and so she had two trunks filled with lovely clothes. Her wardrobe was more extensive than any other pirate she knew of. And that included Gaston, which was saying a lot.

Choosing a sapphire blue full skirt and a white blouse, she topped it off with a black lace-up corset vest and her tall, chocolate-colored,

leather boots. She was almost finished when there was another knock at the door, "Miss Frederica!" a frantic voice shouted.

"Yes?" she answered, smoothing her skirt and trying not to sound alarmed.

"It's Marcus. 'E's awful sick. 'E's in the sick bay. Can you come?"

"Certainly, I'll be there in a moment." She looked at herself in the fist-sized piece of mirror she kept. It was one of her prized possessions, as mirrors were a rare find in the Caribbean. Pleased with her reflection, she took a deep breath and steeled herself for whatever horrible ailment awaited her this day.

Chapter Two

Frederica knew the main reason she was tolerated by the all-man crew aboard the *Ocean's Knave* was not because their Captain appreciated her presence. Rather, it was because she had more medical knowledge than anyone else on the ship. They'd once had a doctor, but he'd been killed in battle before Gaston met Frederica.

Replacing the doctor had proved next to impossible. It was not an easy task finding a doctor willing to sail with a pirate crew. Most had to be commandeered from a settlement on land or from another vessel. Frederica was a happy exception.

She'd learned medicine at the knee of her father, an English physician who was quick-minded and influenced more by successful outcomes than whatever medical theory was fashionable at the time. Frederica's position on the ship was that of doctor, though the men knew she did not technically have the credentials. They'd been skeptical at first, but her kind, bedside manner won them over.

Most men on the crew had been surprised to witness Frederica's skill with a cutlass and her cool head during a battle, but they were just as impressed and grateful to see her softer side when she nursed the sick and injured.

The majority of illnesses and war wounds the men suffered proved fatal. So while she could help alleviate symptoms for some of what ailed the sick, she wasn't always able to cure them, and it was the nurturing and kindness she showed them that meant the most. For that reason, the crew was loyal to her, and they protected her as they would their own mother.

Arriving in the sick bay she was confronted with a man who was doubled over on one of the cots. Frederica laid a hand on his shoulder. "What's troubling you Otis?"

"Arggh! Me belly tis, Miss Frederica," he said with a groan.

"Show me where it hurts," she said. As Otis described his symptoms Frederica nodded, formulating a diagnosis.

The gripes. She'd had success treating this sort of stomach problem with lavender water. "Lie down and try to rest while I make you up a tonic." She rummaged through her supplies and found what she needed. She mixed up a cup and gave him a dose. It was a relief to have a patient with something she could treat. The most frustrating thing about her job was that so often there was nothing she could do to improve a patient's condition.

When he'd finished it, she took the cup and patted him on the arm. "You just rest now and we'll see if that doesn't fix you right up."

She checked on her two other patients, also confined to the sick

room. Both men had come in a few days ago with fever. There wasn't much she could do for them except make sure they had rum or whiskey to dull their aches and pains. When they grew too warm she bathed their heads with a cool cloth.

She found them both sleeping. One man lay peacefully and she took his pulse. Relieved he was still alive, she wiped her brow. It was already hot as Hades in the cramped little room. The other man's sleep was fitful. He thrashed and mumbled unintelligibly, his body drenched with sweat.

She frowned. They'd presented with the same symptoms. Her guess was as good as anyone's which man would have the better outcome, the still one or the flailing one, but she suspected the agitated man stood a better chance of recovery. He was a fighter.

If only life were that simple. To the contrary, events occurred all the time that appeared to have neither rhyme nor reason behind them—such as the unforeseen and tragic murders of her friend Cassandra and the other passengers on the *Adelaide*.

Often at night, while Gaston slept, Frederica lay in bed staring at the ceiling, thinking about Cassandra and that it was because of her that Cassandra had been on that ship. Why had it been her lot to be spared instead of her friend? It was a riddle without an answer, yet she asked herself time after time. Still, she was determined to turn her survivor's guilt into something productive as she felt it gave her the fortitude to be strong and live her life to the fullest. Her friend's death made her vow to help others whenever possible and to try to prevent innocents from being slaughtered for their gold or their navigational charts, or even their medicine.

She moved to the next bed and pressed a cool compress to the restless man's head. He jerked at her touch, said something unintelligible then relaxed back into slumber.

"It's alright. Rest easy," she said, rearranging the cloth on his head.

While she wasn't too pious to embrace the pirate life, she did pride herself in serving as a tempering presence—a force of *some* good in the light of much that was dark. She liked to think the men on their crew were of a higher moral fiber than other pirates, but underneath that hope was the thinly veiled knowledge that this was probably wishful thinking on her part.

Turning her attention to the semi-conscious man in the next bed she took his pulse. It was weak but steady. With a rag she bathed his forehead with cool water. When he did not respond she let go a big breath. Her gut told her this was a bad sign.

After all treatments had been given, she wiped her hands on her skirts, told the men she would be back to check on them later, and

headed above deck for her lesson with Hatch.

* * *

Gaston scarcely noticed the seagulls squawking noisily overhead as he paced the deck of his beloved ship, the *Ocean's Knave*. Taking a deep breath, he inhaled the brisk salty air. This always bolstered his spirits, and with the concerns he had pressing on his mind today, he could use a boost.

"Capt'n." a member of the crew saluted him.

Gaston nodded in return. A young man bumped into him as he trudged backward with his mop, swabbing the deck. "Sorry, Capt'n. Didn't see ya thar."

"As you were," Gaston told him, moving out of the way. The vagabond crew milled around him, busily mending sails and checking their munitions in case they ran across trouble. It pleased him to see them hard at work as he took great pride in his leadership capabilities and knew that a tightly-run ship reflected well on him.

Arriving on the aft deck, he was surprised to find Frederica in the company of Hatch, his longtime friend and compatriot. The bald man was insanely tall—over seven feet—he stood with his arms crossed over his chest, his perpetual scowl firmly entrenched on his tattooed face. His ebony skin appeared to be stretched to its capacity over his enormously sculpted, bulging muscles, and he wore only a pair of worn out britches. The dark greenish tattoos that covered his entire body, served to intimidate most people, which Gaston assumed was their purpose.

When Gaston realized what Hatch and Frederica were doing, his eyes widened involuntarily and it took all of his self-restraint not to intervene. Instead, he took a few steps back in hopes that he could observe them without them noticing.

Frederica closed one eye, took aim, and threw a knife twenty feet in front of her.

"How's that?" she asked. Her intended target was an old barrel, but the knife hit one of the metal rings round the barrel and clattered to the deck.

Hatch barked a few stilted orders. Frederica nodded and strode over to fetch the knife.

Gaston's first reaction was to put a stop to this, the way a parent would take matchsticks away from a small child, but he held himself back. More because he trusted Hatch in all matters than because he wanted Frederica throwing knives.

Hatch's name was a derivative of the word "hatchet," a moniker he had earned due to his remarkable ability to fell another human with his hatchet from forty yards or more. Hatch kept at least four of

the weapons on him at all times, and he could often be found sharpening one of them.

A member of the crew untangling some ropes came dangerously close to where Frederica was practicing her knife throwing. Hatch shouted, "Stay clear!"

The man looked up unaware then saw Frederica aiming inches away from him. He jumped to the side hollering, "Me apologies, Miss."

Hatch scowled at the man. Gaston had no doubt Hatch had warned the men not to travel past his training area. An escaped slave, he'd learned that vigilance was a key to survival. A risk taker Hatch was not.

Their complementary natures made Hatch and Gaston a good pair. Gaston was known not only for his skills as a Captain and a marauder, but also for his keen ability to make big risks pay off handsomely.

Upon their first meeting, Gaston had saved Hatch from a band of men intent on sending him back to the owner of the sugar plantation where he'd been a slave. Over the years, the man had paid Gaston back by saving his life numerous times. Their bond was deep, spanning the years and the hardships they'd endured cementing their friendship, if one could call it that. For Gaston, Hatch felt more like a family member, though he'd never be so sentimental as to voice this opinion.

Gazing at Frederica, he stifled a smirk. There was no doubting it—he had turned the English rose into a true pirate. When she'd prevailed upon him to bring her with him on the high seas, he'd taken it upon himself to teach her to use a sword. After an unsteady start, she began to improve her parrying skills rather dramatically, and now she was easily considered a fine swordswoman.

As he observed them, Gaston saw that Hatch's instructions were slowly sinking in. With each toss of the knife, Frederica's technique improved.

He studied the curve of her bosom as she bent over to retrieve a knife. His cock pressed hard against his pants. No matter how many times he took her, he would never be able to get his fill of her. No other woman had ever affected him like she did. She was a stunningly beautiful woman, with blue eyes so transparent they gave a man the illusion that he might see into her very soul.

She wore blue ribbons threaded through her long, flowing, chestnut mane, and her masculine boots mixed with that incredibly flattering corset she wore gave her a wild, yet extremely sexy appeal. It puzzled him how the other men endured being around her without being able to have her, when he himself was driven mad with desire

for her on a consistent basis.

His immense attraction to her was likely the reason he even considered her proposal to rob other pirate vessels rather than preying on whatever meek ship they came across. But the more he considered her idea, the more positives he saw with it.

Attacking other pirates had quickly made them the scourge of the pirate community. There were many ships sailing the seas who'd like to see his head on a pike.

The thought of his head leaving his body made him uneasy, and Gaston tugged on his collar. Drawing himself up to his full height, he straightened his jacket and peered over the bow. They were heading toward a parlay he hoped would offer a solution to their problem.

His mission was to convene with the commanders of several other ships in hopes that they could form an alliance and offer one another protection in addition to greater financial reward for all concerned. There was strength in numbers and he hoped the other captains would recognize the wisdom in forming a coalition in which fellow seamen had your backs. He would use his most persuasive arguments and trust he would be able to bring them aboard, so to speak.

For, without an alliance, Gaston feared his luck would soon run out. A feeling of trepidation gripped him, and despite the sun's scorching rays beating down on him, an eerie chill trilled down his back.

Chapter Three

When they were in port, Frederica liked to walk along the beach in the early morning. The night before, the *Ocean's Knave* had anchored off the coast of Oyster Cay, a small port several hours southeast of Nassau in preparation for the meeting this afternoon.

Frederica awoke before dawn and climbed down the ladder alongside the ship into a rowboat which she took to shore. The water lapped softly against the side of the boat, and the fog slowly lifted, unveiling the island ahead of her. She loved being the first one to stir on the ship, the solitude of the silent morning with the exception of a few stray seagull cries. In these moments she felt as though the whole world was created for her to enjoy, and she took a moment to take in the beauty of the blue-green water that surrounded her and the beach with its sugary white sand.

After basking in her surroundings for a short time, she beached her vessel and strolled up and down the shore, gathering interesting seashells for her collection and wishing she could take the thick, heavy air and raise it off her sagging shoulders. Her body drooped from the humidity, but her spirits remained high. She and Gaston finally had a plan to help protect their crew and soon they would be able to set sail again. She smiled at the prospect of new adventures.

Hmm. In the distance someone was walking toward her. It was unusual for her to run into another person on her morning promenade. Get most pirates within throwing distance of a town with a tavern and some women and they'd stay up all night and sleep most of the day. Unless there was work to be done, which was not the case today. The crew's work was on hold and their break would continue until Gaston's meeting today.

As the figure drew closer she could tell by his size and the color of his skin that it was Hatch. She'd never seen a more imposing man. She waved to him, and he waved back. When he came into earshot she called, "Greetings, my friend. What are you doing this hazy morning?"

He smiled in greeting, his white teeth a stark contrast against his black skin. Frederica remembered the first time she had seen Hatch. He'd scared her to death as he appeared when she and Gaston had been marooned on a beautiful island. They had only just finished making love when a skirmish broke out around them. The giant had jumped out from behind some bushes and she hadn't known if he were friend or foe. His black skin shone in the sunlight and he had planted a hatchet directly into his opponent's skull, hurling it from over thirty feet away.

Later, Gaston explained that Hatch was one of his crew members and Frederica learned she had no cause to be frightened of the enormous man who had such proficiency with a hatchet. But she would never forget her initial terror at watching him in battle. Over time she had grown fond of Hatch, and though she knew he'd never harm her, she was always mindful of what a fierce warrior he was.

"I make necklaces," he said showing her several loops of shells he'd strung around his neck.

"Oh, those are beautiful!" she said.

He lifted one of the necklaces over his head and draped it around Frederica's neck. She felt her eyes round as she held out the tiny shells to get a better view. "Oh Hatch, how lovely. How did you make it?"

He dipped a hand in his pocket and pulled out a handful of small shells, the majority of them oval-shaped, round and smooth on one side, but when you flipped them over the brown and white striped shells had a horizontal opening that looked like two lips with a purple slash down the middle.

"What kind of shells are these?" Frederica asked.

"Pretty ones?" he said with a shrug.

She laughed. "I love them. But how did you make a necklace from them?"

He pulled a roll of fishing line from his other pocket. "Sit. I will show you." He motioned to a sand dune and they went and sat down on it.

Hatch showed her how to take a sharp needle, which had been pinned to his pants leg, and pierce the shell. Then he showed her how to thread the shell onto the fishing line.

Frederica tried, but could not get the piercing at first. She broke the first shell she attempted to spear and made a face.

Hatch laughed. "You can do it. Must practice, missy."

With a sigh Frederica picked up another one and tried again. "How did you learn to do this?" she asked.

"My sister. She was always making a chain of this or that. Daisies, buttons, whatever she found."

"I never knew you had a sister, Hatch. Where is she now?"

In a fluid gesture he pointed at the sky.

"She is no longer with us? You mean she's dead?" Frederica asked, not bothering to hide the concern in her voice.

Hatch nodded slowly and continued to work with his shells.

Frederica laid the shell and needle on the sand next to her and looked at him, "What happened to her?"

He waved her question away. "Missy don't need to concern herself with that."

She realized Hatch knew a lot about her, but she knew next to

nothing about him, and she pressed on. "Tell me."

He rolled his eyes and threw up his hands. "You are not going to leave this alone?"

She crossed her arms over her chest. "No, I'm not."

With a sigh, he began. "My sister and I were born on a sugar plantation."

"In Jamaica?"

"Yes."

"I think Gaston mentioned that."

He nodded. "Our mother was a slave. She'd been captured somewhere in Africa and sent to Jamaica to work on a plantation. My father, he was an Arawak Indian, a tribe native to Jamaica. My mother fell in love with him when he came to barter with her owner."

I do not think that my sister and I had same father. Her skin was lighter, but my mother never talked about it. When we were coming up I worked in the fields, and my sister, Hattie, she worked in the house. She was good with the white folks and they liked her."

Frederica nodded, encouraging him to continue.

"A Spaniard and his wife owned the plantation until I was almost grown. Then the English conquered the island and all hell busted out. The Englishman who took over the plantation was an evil man. Our Spanish owner had always treated us well, but the new master was a bad man. He liked to abuse the slaves. We were used to much better care and this led to an uprising. I escaped, but my sister was killed."

Frederica's heart clenched and sorrow welled up inside her. "Oh that's terrible," she said. "I'm sorry for your loss."

Hatch nodded. "She was such a bright light, brought joy everywhere she went. A part of me died back there with her."

Frederica's throat tightened. "What did you do after that?"

"I kept running. In the mountains, inland, I found a better life with the Tainos Indian people. They welcomed me because of my Indian heritage and because they hated slavery. But after a couple of years life became too tame and I heard the call of the sea. I'd only heard of it, I'd never seen the ocean, but the tales of pirates and the fortunes they could amass in a short amount of time lured me to Port Royale, where I met Capt'n Galette."

Wanting to cheer him up, Frederica laid a hand on his forearm. "That has been good fortune for us all." She smiled warmly and went back to stringing shells. Anything to keep her mind off a sea full of pirates out for hers and Gaston's blood.

Chapter Four

Gaston had planned the parlay in a sleepy little village at the mouth of Oyster Cay. It was a small port not far from Nassau. The town was not much to speak of, which made it perfect for Gaston's summit with the three other ship's captains. The small population of Oyster Cay made it less likely for word to leak out about his planned alliance than if they were to have met in Nassau. In addition, he didn't relish the idea of bumping into some of the pirates he and his men had previously crossed.

It was nearing noon, and the plan was for Hatch to accompany Gaston to the meet, which was to be held in a back room in the local inn. Gaston had pre-arranged a luncheon for their guests.

Gaston dressed in his finest navy and gold brocade jacket, which he accentuated with his usual hat with the purple plume. Borrowing Frederica's small mirror, he approved the final picture and bent to kiss her.

"Can I go into town for some shopping?" she asked and he thought for the millionth time how glad he was they were pirates. They both shared a taste for expensive things they never would have been able to afford had he been a regular sailor or laborer.

"We shall see, my dear. Let me first return with a report from our meeting. Then we will determine how we will proceed."

"Dinner, then? In town?" She pouted. He could see from her reaction that she wanted to accompany him to the meeting, but he knew her presence would only serve as a distraction.

Weary, he sighed. "I fear it is too early in the game for me to make any promises. Now I must be off." He touched her affectionately on the chin and bid her farewell.

* * *

The meeting took place in a back room of the Lucky Sloop, an establishment that boasted both an inn and a tavern. Gaston had hoped he and Hatch would be the first to arrive, but to his consternation when he was shown into the room designated for the meet, the others were already there.

"Ah, Gaston Galette," said Miles Appling, a blond man who appeared to be the leader of the group, proffering his hand and clapping Gaston on the shoulder. "It has been a long time."

"Too long," Gaston agreed embracing his old friend, and captain of the *Independence*. Appling was of a similar age as Gaston, well-dressed, and was similarly educated. He and Gaston had served under a crusty Captain Mosely when they had both been young sailors.

Seeing him now, it galled Gaston to admit that his friend was also quite handsome. His cornflower blue eyes and wheat-colored hair, a sporting girl's dream, weren't often seen in these parts. Accustomed to being the most attractive man in any room, Gaston eyed Appling's conservative wardrobe and consoled himself by noting that Appling's style was plebian to say the least. He sniffed and turned his attention to the others.

"This is Edward Chatham, captain of the *Volusia*," Appling indicated the tall, lanky dark-haired man.

"Pleasure to meet you, sir. I've heard many tales of your adventures," Chatham practically fell over himself rushing to shake Gaston's hand. The lad must have been in his mid-twenties, a decade younger than Appling and Gaston. While he seemed green, Gaston reminded himself that he would have behaved similarly at the man's age. There were positives to Chatham's youth—namely enthusiasm and energy. With the right men around to guide him, he would suit their purpose, so long as he wasn't a fool.

"Likewise," Gaston said, peeling his hand away from Chatham's unceasing grip.

Gaston turned his attention to the last fellow, a short, thick man who'd clearly spent the majority of his life at sea. His face was craggy and deeply lined by years of exposure to the elements, and he blew smoke rings with every puff he took from his pipe.

"May I present Captain Pugwash, captain of the *Greed of Hades*?" Appling asked, though it really wasn't a question.

"Aye." Gaston surveyed the last man. Much rougher than the other two men, Pugwash had the air of a salty sea captain who had brought himself up in the ranks with guts and toughness. Though he stood a good two feet shorter than Gaston, he had a compact, muscular build usually indicative of a powerful fighter. He'd bet even money Pugwash could wax the floor with all of them. This was the kind of pirate Gaston wanted, no *needed* on his side.

Gaston shook the man's hand. "Delighted to make your acquaintance, Captain Pugwash."

Nearly cutting off Gaston's circulation with his grip, Pugwash squinted and made a grimace. "What 'appened to your eye there Galette?" He pointed at Gaston's eye patch.

"Splinter," Gaston said.

"Aye, them's the devil, ain't they? Had one in me shoulder once." Pugwash shook his head.

Things were going well so far. Commiserating over battle wounds was a good sign.

In the center of the room, Appling gestured to a table set with four chairs. "Have a seat, gentlemen."

The three captains all looked up in alarm at the sound of the door closing and the sight of Hatch standing with his back to it, as though guarding against their exit.

“I say, Galette, the meeting was supposed to be the four of us. Who, pray tell, is that?” Appling asked, irritation seeping from his voice.

“There are three of you and only one of me. Surely you don’t mind if my man Hatch stays. Shall we say it levels the playing field a bit?” Gaston waved the concern away with his hand and flashed his most charming don’t-mind-us smile.

“You’re sure he’s trustworthy?” Chatham asked, staring at the huge, black-skinned man cautiously.

Gaston waved a hand in the air. “Perfectly. Hatch is harmless.” Staring pointedly at Chatham, he continued, “Surely you don’t begrudge me the opportunity to guard my own safety.” He shrugged. “And yours.”

Chatham’s brow furrowed and he bowed his head formally. “Certainly Captain Galette. I would have it no other way.”

Gaston sat back in his chair and took a sip from the ale before them. The other men tipped their mugs, and Appling proposed a toast that they come to an agreement that would benefit all parties.

There were “ayes” all around and they settled into their discussion.

Gaston had vetted these men extensively prior to setting up the meeting. Since they’d agreed to come, he hoped they would be agreeable and considered this meeting a venue for ironing out the details of their alliance.

Chatham lacked the experience the other captains had, but he had a strong relationship with Governor Whitehurst in Port Royale and he carried letters of mark from the English government for certain logging jobs which could come in handy if they ever ran into legal trouble. Pugwash had a large ship and strong leadership qualities, not to mention an experienced crew. Appling was a former military captain for the British Navy, and Chatham had served under him. Appling’s reputation for shrewd battle tactics preceded him, and the fact that Chatham had risen so high for his age indicated he was a talented seaman himself.

Gaston knew that although Pugwash and himself might appear to be polar opposites, they shared more common ground than one might think. They’d seen the horrors of battles at sea, and they both knew how to steer not only their vessels, but also the hearts and minds of their men. A firm respect between the two began to form as they drank their ale and worked through the details of their agreement.

The other three captains wanted treasure, and Gaston Galette had

a reputation in the Caribbean for being able to nose out the best hauls from those deep, dark waters. Tales of the booty he'd captured spread far and wide. By the time the stories got back to him they were often wildly exaggerated, but Gaston never corrected the inaccuracies. It would harm his vanity too much to do so.

After several hours, the four ratified an agreement. They would sail together and split whatever was plundered four ways. Gaston marveled at how people often thought pirates were greedy, yet when it came to divvying up treasure, no one was more scrupulous than a band of pirates.

The plan was for them to set sail in approximately one week's time for the Windward Passage. Gaston had received information from a trusted source that a cache of jewels and doubloons had been stolen from a Spanish warship and was now buried on a small island south of Tortuga, and he already felt lighter at the thought of having a larger fleet accompanying the *Ocean's Knave*.

With their business completed, Gaston straightened the lapels of his jacket and stood up. As he was about to leave, Pugwash spoke up in his gravelly voice, "Ave heard you travel with a girl, Galette. Is this true?"

Warily, Gaston answered, "I do not see how that is any of your business."

"They say that she holds the purse strings. I'd say that's plenty of our business when yer doin' business with us. What say ye to this?"

Flumoxed, Gaston sputtered, "Why, that is preposterous. Miss Beauchamp is merely a companion, and a surprisingly accomplished swordswoman I might add." Gaston says.

"I'm sure she is quite talented." Pugwash chuckled. "With a sword." The other two men snickered.

"They say you are besotted, Captain," Chatham adding.

"Again, what concern is it of yours?" Gaston frowned.

"I believe, Captain Galette, that we feel uneasy about going into an agreement with a woman we don't know. If it is, as they say, that she controls the dealings on the *Ocean's Knave*," Appling said.

"This is outrageous! Why would you then agree to all that you have in the past few hours, if you had such reservations?" Gaston's heart rate had increased tenfold in the last two minutes.

Appling shrugged. "It is a delicate, yet troubling matter."

Gaston's anxiety level rose as he felt their deal slipping away, and he sat heavily back into his seat.

"Perhaps we should be 'avin' this meeting with the little lady," Pugwash laughed.

The three captains looked at each other then back at Gaston, barely concealing their laughter.

“See here, I don’t see what affair it is of yours whom I choose to crew my ship. I have no intention of manning yours for you,” Gaston said with a sniff.

“Well, Capt’n Galette, we’ve heard you run around behind Miss Beauchamp carrying her skirts for her. It is unnerving to go into protectin’ some pantywaist, lovesick fool,” Pugwash continued.

Gaston banged his fist down on the table. “Enough! How dare you speak of something you know nothing about? I will have you know that while I have the utmost regard for Miss Beauchamp, she is my ward and she does as I command.”

The smiles drained from the other men’s faces.

“If any of the three of you would like to pay her a visit, I will gladly arrange it.” Gaston gathered his composure and adjusted the lapels on his jacket.

“You’re sayin’ we might ‘ave a turn with her?” Pugwash asked. He turned to the Appling and Chatham. “I’ve ‘eard she’s quite a beauty.”

Appling and Chatham’s eyes lit up.

Appling eyed Gaston. “You would share her with us?”

“Can you treat her with the respect a fine woman like herself deserves? I will not have her harmed or humiliated.”

Appling nodded his assent. “I give you my word, Galette. We are not animals.”

Gaston surveyed the three men, and to his dismay he believed them. Appling and Chatham had the reputation for being men of their word. Pugwash was the wildcard, but he intended on trusting the man with his life and his treasure. Hatch would ensure that Pugwash would do no worse to Frederica than he did with any woman he bedded.

“A one-time interlude, to prove to you that Miss Beauchamp does my bidding, not the other way around. After that, you will agree to drop the matter?”

The men nodded in agreement.

“My man Hatch will be in attendance, of course.” Gaston nodded his head curtly in Hatch’s direction.

“Wait a moment, we have no need for his presence,” Chatham protested, eyeing the surly maroon standing silently in the corner. Gaston smiled inwardly at Chatham’s obvious and justifiable fear.

“Ah, but *I* do. Miss Beauchamp is a valuable asset of mine, and it is imperative no harm comes to her. Consider his presence my insurance policy.”

“So you’re saying she’s your slave,” Appling said.

Gaston touched his index finger to his chin, considering the question. Raising a brow he replied, “I assert that the exact nature of my relationship with Miss Beauchamp is not your affair.” He paused. “But yes, something like that.”

Standing, Gaston signaled to Hatch. "I will make the arrangements. Good day gentlemen." He clapped Applling on the shoulder and exited the building.

He should have enjoyed watching Hatch give the men a menacing glance out of the corner of his eye, but he was occupied trying to determine how he was going to tell Frederica that in order for them to have the protection they so desperately needed he'd had to give her to three men for an evening.

Chapter Five

Having grown bored waiting for Gaston at the ship, Frederica came ashore to wait for Gaston in the village. While she realized the meeting was “men’s business,” she had little patience for being left behind. She’d found a shady spot outside the Lucky Sloop on a stone wall. Resting there, under a canopy of palm trees, she felt something brush against her ankles.

Accustomed to the rats on the *Ocean’s Knave*, she drew her legs up and hugged her knees to her chest. Upon further investigation, however, she saw it wasn’t a rat, but rather a skinny white cat, and she set her feet back on the ground. The kitty nuzzled against her skirts then slid up under them making a pattern similar to the numeral eight around her legs. The animal purred, and Frederica bent down to touch him, her fingers luxuriating in the cat’s soft, white fur. His coat was matted in a few places, but for the most part he seemed to have maintained himself quite well considering his malnourished state.

She determined the cat was not going to bite her, so she picked him up and set him in her lap. He was even lighter than she’d expected, and he erupted into a steady stream of rolling purrs as she stroked his back.

“Poor kitty. Someone needs to feed you,” she told him. “You look like you haven’t eaten in weeks.” The cat was small in size, his jagged ribs poking out his sides making painful-looking angles. His big, blue eyes reminded her of her own, light in color and almost transparent in appearance. The cat seemed young—older than a kitten, but it was difficult to determine his age as his small size might be attributed to his lack of food rather than his age.

A door creaked open behind her and she heard Gaston’s voice. Tucking the cat under her arm, she strolled toward him. “Gaston!” she called, waving to him.

Gaston frowned at her then turned and looked toward the building from which he’d just emerged. There was nothing behind him, so what was he looking at?

“Frederica, what are you doing here?” he asked through clenched teeth. Hurrying toward her he wrapped an arm around her and shuttled her away from the inn.

“I got bored so I thought I would find you and perhaps we could go shopping. I desperately need a new pair of...”

The sounds of several men coming out of the inn interrupted her. They were boisterous and loud, not like drunken soldiers, but the way powerful men sounded when they got together. There was an air of leadership about them, and sensing she was in the presence of

important men, she turned to see who was making all of the ruckus.

"My, my. Galette!" The short, heavyset man shouted to Gaston.

Frederica looked from the man to Gaston. Were these the other captains with whom Gaston had recently met?

Gaston stopped abruptly and whirled to face the men.

"Is that her?" the tall lanky man asked. He wore a three-cornered hat and looked to be about Frederica's age.

"Aye, tis me beauty," Gaston said, and she felt him take a deep breath. He continued, "Gentlemen, allow me to present Mademoiselle Beauchamp." He bowed and turned to her. "Frederica these are the captains I met with earlier. Captain Pugwash," he indicated the shorter man, "Captain Edward Chatham," the tall man nodded to her, "and Captain Miles Appling, formerly of the British Navy."

Frederica noticed Appling for the first time. He was stunningly handsome with his golden blond hair, cornflower blue eyes, and winsome smile. When their eyes connected her heart skipped a beat.

Proffering her hand for them to kiss, she crooned, "Pleased to make your acquaintance gentlemen." She and her mates needed these men's protection, and she was determined to make a good impression on them. It wouldn't hurt to flirt with them, for if there were any way she could help secure their loyalty to the cause of the *Ocean's Knave* she would do it.

Pugwash's eyes drifted from her chest all the way down to her feet and back up again, settling on her face. He nodded. "You too, lass," he said, not bothering to hide the lust in his gaze.

Chatham, on the other hand, shifted his weight from his left to his right and back again. He removed his hat, kissed her hand, and said, "Pleasure milady." all the while avoiding her eyes. So he was a shy one. Perhaps in his line of work he was unaccustomed to meeting young ladies.

Frederica favored both men with a coy smile, and then turned to face Captain Appling.

In one graceful sweep, Appling removed his hat and lifted Frederica's hand to his lips. "It is not every day that seamen like ourselves have the opportunity to bask in beauty such as yours, Miss Beauchamp. You honor us with your presence."

She thought she heard Gaston choking behind her, but when she turned to look he only shook his head and tugged at his collar. The temperature *was* warm, but he seemed more affected by the heat than usual.

Not wanting to be rude she turned her attention back to Captain Appling. "Why thank you. You are so kind. I trust that you gentlemen had a productive meeting." Her eyes moved over each of them. Pugwash's unabashed leering and Chatham's shyness were reactions

she frequently got from men. She lived in a man's world, and she'd learned to make accommodations for how men responded to her.

But she saw something different in the eyes of Miles Appling. Curiosity. The man seemed interested in *her*. Not her breasts or what was between her legs. He seemed to notice her as a person, separate from her beauty. She found him intriguing as well.

"We most certainly did, and we look forward to a mutually beneficial partnership with the *Ocean's Knave*." Appling nodded toward Gaston who gave him a curt drop of the chin.

"Yes, well come along Frederica," said Gaston and took her by the elbow which was when he noticed the cat. "What in heaven's name is *that*?" he snapped.

"Oh, it's a kitty. He's terribly hungry. I was just sitting over there waiting for you and he found me. He's darling, wouldn't you agree?" she asked Gaston.

"I wouldn't say anything of the sort," Gaston grumbled.

"May I?" Captain Appling asked, reaching for her feline friend.

"You may," Frederica beamed at him, appreciative of his interest in the poor creature.

Appling held the cat in one large hand while examining him with the other. "He is rather starved. A stray most likely, probably been scrounging for scraps behind the inn."

"The poor thing," Frederica said taking the cat back from Appling. He patted the kitty on the head and the animal began to purr loudly causing Frederica and Appling to laugh at the same time.

"That's enough, Frederica. It's time to go," Gaston said gruffly. "Gentlemen, we bid you good day." Gaston lifted his plumed hat with a flourish, gripped Frederica's arm, and marched her away.

"Goodbye!" Frederica called over her shoulder and the men bid her farewell.

"Set that wretched animal down, Freddie," Gaston barked when they were out of earshot of the other captains.

"What? No! I'm going to keep him." Frederica stomped her foot and wriggled away from his grasp.

"You will do no such thing. We live aboard a pirate ship, not in a house on land." He caught up with her.

"That is of no consequence. We have cats on board the *Ocean's Knave*. Why not have another one?" She gave him her prettiest pout, hoping to persuade him.

"We have a cat, singular. Slash is a great mouser. I'm sure that scrawny thing would make a sorry excuse for a hunter. In any case he looks half dead as it is."

"Master, you're being unkind, both to me and to this poor creature. It's not like you to be so heartless."

“Heartless?” he pondered. “Hardly. Now set the thing down and come back to the ship. There’s something we need to discuss.”

“But Gaston...” she pleaded.

“Set him down,” he said firmly. Whatever was on his mind was clearly troubling him.

She hesitated.

“Now!” he barked. “I do not want to have to punish you for disobedience.”

She could tell by the look in his eye that he meant what he said, and her bottom lip quivered. “A moment. Please give me a moment to tell him goodbye.”

He sighed. “Fine.”

Frederica rubbed the little cat’s ears and whispered to him, “I’m sorry I must leave you here. It has been a pleasure knowing you, kitty.” With a small sob she set him on the ground and turned her back to him so she could walk away.

She heard him meowing and a piece of her heart broke off. She was often lonely aboard the *Ocean’s Knave*. For the most part her life was wonderful, but she missed her best friend Cassandra. She missed having a friend to talk with about things. Usually Gaston was enough, but sometimes she wished she had a girlfriend to laugh and giggle with over silly things.

That kitty had needed her, and there was a part of her that needed him. Why couldn’t Gaston see that? She wiped away a tear and followed Gaston to the ship.

* * *

“You did *what*?” A white fury had overtaken Frederica, and was now in a full-blown rage. “You agreed I would do what?” Her voice grew more shrill by the minute.

Gaston had taken her back to their cabin aboard the *Ocean’s Knave* and told her about his agreement with Pugwash, Chatham, and Appling. He seemed upset about the bargain too, his brow had a new crease and he looked weary. He sat on the bed as Frederica paced around the room trying to absorb the news.

“If you won’t agree to this, Freddie, we will not receive their protection. We will be sailing the Caribbean marked men, the prime target for every pirate ship on the water. Our crew is mighty, but one day we will find ourselves out-manned, out-gunned, or both.

“We headed down this path because you don’t have the stomach for killing innocents, but there are consequences to every action. And the consequences for what we’ve done is that we’re the most hunted, most wanted pirates in the Caribbean.”

“Good deeds must be punished? Is that what you’re saying?” she

asked, defiantly.

"Frederica, you are not a child. Do not behave as one. Pirates, as a rule, do not share your scruples. Perhaps I should never have gone along with your idea to raid other pirate ships, but I did, and there's no sense in rehashing events from the past. What's done is done.

"The answer is simple. We need protection, a larger force. There is strength in numbers and these three captains are willing to join us with their ships and their crews. That would make us four hundred strong, Frederica! Imagine that... The only snag is if they think me a dandy who dances to a woman's tune, they will have no desire to be associated with the Ocean's Knave." He shook his head. "And no pirate worth his salt would blame them."

Knowing he spoke the truth did little to quell her concerns. Her stomach tightened. "I still don't understand why they must bed me," she complained. Gaston was treating her as if she were a possession to be shared without a hint of concern for how his actions would affect her, and it hurt.

Running out of patience, he sighed. "My dear, if I offer you as a gift they will view you more as my property than as my shrew, thereby proving their concerns are unfounded."

Rolling her eyes she repeated his words with a sneer. "Your *property*?"

"Yes, my property," he said in a no-nonsense tone.

"But..." she tried to find words. The idea of three men, strangers to her, taking her body as they wished frightened her. However, along with the fear, she felt a little glimmer of excitement and possibly curiosity. Gaston was the only man she'd ever been intimate with, and now she wondered what it would be like to be taken by another man.

"But what?" he asked.

"Nothing," she said slumping down on the bunk next to him.

"Ultimately, I will leave this as your decision." He stroked her hair. "Not to put too fine a point on it, but consider the men, Frederica, our men. Each time we go into battle we take them with us. To a large degree their lives rest in our hands. If we do not provide them with the best protection possible, we're sending them to their deaths, don't you see?" He tilted her chin up so that she had no choice but to meet his gaze.

Staring into his dark, coffee-colored eye she let the information sink in. Guilt rose up inside her, that uncomfortable yet familiar emotion that had threatened to eat her alive after Cassandra's death. No, she didn't want the blood of their men on her hands. She'd suffered that enough.

Unfortunately, she knew Gaston was right. If it hadn't been for her and her idealistic views, they would be plundering every ship they

came upon, regardless of its passengers or their situation. In that case, they'd be no special threat to pirates and there would be no price on their heads. But now, resulting from their edict to only steal from other pirates, some of the most bloodthirsty men in the world were after them. She knew Gaston was right. Their men were loyal and good to her. She should sacrifice for their crew. But at what cost?

Making up her mind she set her jaw and asked bravely, "What do I need to do?"

Chapter Six

Gaston took an unopened bottle of rum out of the chest in the corner of the room and sliced the top off it with his cutlass. He handed the bottle to Frederica. "Drink."

"What?" she asked.

He indicated the bottle. "Drink. You'll likely need the courage."

She took a sip.

"More," he insisted.

With a groan she took a long draw from the neck of the bottle. The rum slid easily down her throat leaving a trail of warmth behind as it settled in her belly. "Happy?" she asked.

"That's not exactly how I would describe my frame of mind, no." He frowned.

"Pray tell, what has you so vexed?"

Gaston sat across from her on the chest and sighed. "My dear, before you rendezvous with Appling and the others—there are some things I need to prepare you for."

Apprehension rising, she took another slug of rum and asked, "What things?"

Gaston steepled his fingers and rested his chin upon them. "Have you considered that the men might desire to all have you at the same time?"

Confused, she wrinkled her brow.

He shrugged. "They might decide to utilize all you have to offer."

She laughed. "I'm certain that will be the case, but..."

He lowered his voice to a whisper. "Fill all your holes—"

Her eyes flew open.

"—at the same time."

"You must be joking!" she spat. "I don't even have..."

He nodded knowingly. "Ah, yes, you do."

She stared at him agape.

Pointing at her mouth he said, "There's one of them."

"I don't believe you! They wouldn't..."

"Why wouldn't they?" he asked, folding his arms over his chest. "Because they are upstanding citizens of the world with sophisticated sensibilities? Frederica, dear girl—they are pirates."

Fear rose inside her and tears threatened to come. "Then how can I be safe? This sounds dangerous."

"They will not harm you, Hatch will see to that."

"Hatch? What does he have to do with all this?"

"I had them agree he was to be there, to protect you. If they attempt anything you cannot endure he will see that they stop."

“Ugh! That will make it worse having Hatch there.”

“Why? He will ensure your safety.”

“Hatch will have to see me naked? Watch me have sex? Gaston, that is too embarrassing to bear!”

Gaston shook his head vehemently. “It won’t be like that. You know how Hatch is. He will only be there for your protection. You won’t even know he’s there. Anyway, Hatch does not partake in the ways of the flesh.”

Pursing her lips she asked, “How can you be so certain?”

“Have you ever known Hatch to visit the prostitutes when the men go ashore?”

“No...”

“He doesn’t. The man avoids lust-filled pursuits.”

“I don’t understand.”

“It was his sister. She was raped repeatedly before she was killed. Ever since then he’s taken a vow of celibacy.”

“Oh, that’s terrible. You mean like to honor his sister?”

“Something like that. He doesn’t speak of it, but I’ve known the man for years and I’m telling you the truth. He will merely be a presence in the shadows in case you need him, a kind of insurance policy for my peace of mind, and yours.”

She absorbed his words and her thoughts drifted back to the idea of all three men taking her at once. Suddenly, she didn’t feel worldly anymore. Instead she felt as naïve as she had when Gaston had first taught her how to pleasure a man. “I don’t think I completely understand what is to be asked of me,” she admitted shyly.

“Take off your clothes,” Gaston said with a gleam in his eye.

She sighed a heavy sigh and began unlacing her boots. She was not modest anymore with Gaston, and she would have to learn to become even less modest if she were going to be naked in a room with four other men.

Once she had taken her boots off she stood, slipped out of her skirt and blouse, and offered her back to Gaston so he might unlace her corset. Standing behind her, he moved her lush curtain of hair to the side and kissed her neck. “You are incredibly beautiful, my love.”

She breathed in the scent of him, salt air mixed with leather and rum and tried to relax. He finished removing her underclothes but remained fully clothed.

“Take another sip of rum then bend over, girl,” he said firmly slapping her on the rear end.

She took two long sips of rum. Whatever he was going to do to her, she gathered it wouldn’t hurt to be tipsy for it. A warm, buzzy feeling reached down into her extremities and she bent over the bed, feet on the floor, holding herself up on her elbows.

"You have the most delectable ass," he said, caressing her round globes with his hands.

"Mmm," she uttered, the rum and his touch combined to put her in a blissful state.

"Spread those legs," he said.

She moved her feet farther apart, feeling quite exposed. This was at the same time humiliating and exciting.

"Wider!" he barked and smacked her tush.

She began to shuffle her feet, but he took her legs and moved them several inches farther.

"That's more like it," he said, dipping a hand between her legs and stroking her already wet pussy.

A moan escaped her throat.

"You like that, don't you?"

She whimpered an unintelligible response.

His hand crashed down on her bottom. "Let's try that again. This time answer me properly."

With a yelp she replied, "Yes, master."

"Very good. Now we have two days to turn you into a proper whore so I need you to do your dead level best to cooperate."

"Yes, master."

Another blow rained down on her cheeks. The skin of her backside stung and it grew hotter with each smack. In an attempt to focus on her breathing, she drew in a deep breath and exhaled as she felt another thwack to her ass.

Relief flooded her as his hands rubbed the achy, blistered flesh of her rear. It felt so good that she toppled off her elbows and began to melt onto the bed.

"Back on your elbows," he admonished, and she summoned the strength to prop herself up again.

"You will need endurance to take on three men." His hand again searched out her cunt and he entered her with two fingers.

She groaned as he pounded into her at a rapid pace. Her muscles clamped down on him. She wanted more, wanted him inside her, wanted his hands and his mouth on her. But for now she must be content with what he gave her, and she could feel her juices sloshing out of her, pictured them running down his hand.

She felt his erection press against her lower back, between the dimples that rested atop her heart-shaped ass. It rubbed between her cheeks, the head pushed against her cleft, and she brazenly lifted her bottom toward him involuntarily, unable to stop herself.

Curling his hand in just the right way he slammed into that most sensitive spot at the top of her front interior wall. The sensations were enough to make her float away, and it took all her strength to stay up

on her elbows. The world around her had disappeared, leaving only Gaston and her, and her animalistic urges, her desire to be taken.

As if he could read her mind, he withdrew his hand, grabbed her by the hips and sheathed himself inside her now-slick channel. With a dreamy smile she stretched her fingers out in front of her, preparing to enjoy a thorough fucking, the kind Gaston usually treated her to nightly.

Zing! An unexpected jolt of fire suddenly sprung up inside her asshole. Frederica let out a yowl, to which Gaston growled, "Quiet!"

The fiery pain continued as it felt as though he were forcing his two fingers inside her ass. The lower half of her body jumped, pitched, squirmed, trying to rid itself of the latest intruder.

"Stop it, Frederica!" Gaston said through clenched teeth. "Relax. You must relax or it will hurt worse."

"But what are you doing? Why are you doing that? It hurts," she sobbed.

"I know that it hurts. It is called anal training, my dear. But if you can relax your body will grow accustomed to it. It might even begin to feel pleasurable."

"I doubt it," she whimpered.

"Well if you do not grow accustomed to a few fingers I'm not sure how you're going to accommodate a whole cock."

The thought practically paralyzed her with fear, and all she could do was emit a whining noise. She realized she sounded like a puppy who'd been kicked.

He slowly moved the fingers farther into her ass. "Breathe," he told her and she did.

"Now relax, pet. It will get easier. I promise."

Screwing her eyes shut tight she gave up trying to hold herself up on her elbows and hugged herself tightly, her torso and cheek smooshed against the bed linens.

His cock thrust deeply inside her—in and out, and his fingers mimicked the same movement inside her tiny hole. At first the muscles around the edge of her opening screamed red, angry flares of agony. But after some focused breathing and several minutes, the pain seemed to give way to an interesting sensation.

Finally, the feel of his fingers fucking her ass began to feel good, and her cries went from moans of protest to moans of ecstasy.

Then as suddenly as it had begun, he withdrew his cock and his fingers. Curious, she looked back over her shoulder to see what had happened. Then she felt it, his cock thrummed at the door of her ass, and she tensed up.

"Stop doing that. You must relax. I've stretched you now, you will be able to take it. Relax," he repeated.

She had felt his finger in her ass before but she had never taken his cock there. She hadn't even considered it, but he expected her to, and as frightened as she was, she knew she would not risk disappointing him. His regard for her was too important. She wanted nothing more than to please him, so she did her best to relax.

The first inch was the most difficult. The pain took her breath away and she beat on the bed with her fists.

"You're doing fine," he encouraged her as he shoved himself farther into her smallest of holes. His cock was slick, covered in the juices from her pussy, which helped it slide in better. After he'd made some progress, he began to pull back slightly then push forward very slowly.

She felt her ass stretch around him and a strange heat permeated her tight little opening. Gaston reached around her and found her clit. He played with the swollen bud as he stroked her ass with his cock. After a few moments, he found a rhythm and Frederica found herself purring in time with his movements.

He leaned over, nibbled her shoulder and whispered, "See? Not so bad, is it mademoiselle?"

The tension in her body had begun to mount. At first she was unable to speak then her climax crashed over her body in waves. Her hips jerked, the sensations to her clit became too much to bear and she flopped under him like a fish out of water. "No!" was all she could manage.

Carried away by passion he picked up the pace with his hips and emptied his seed into her ass. When he stilled, he caressed her rounded cheeks before pulling out.

"What was it you were saying?" he asked, giving her hair a playful tug.

"No, I was saying no it's not so bad," she said, rolling over onto her back, still breathing heavily.

He lay down beside her, his length against hers. Pulling her body to face his, he kissed her deeply. He tasted of rum and a hint of licorice as his tongue found hers. She ran her fingers through his dreadlocks as their mouths danced the familiar yet still enticing dance that was theirs and theirs alone.

"Now, if you can do that with a cock in your throat and another in your cunt we'll be in business." Gaston said and gave her a playful smack on the ass.

Chapter Seven

The next afternoon rolled around entirely too soon for Frederica. Though she'd dressed in her finest frock, a silk gown the same color as her haunting pale blue eyes, she couldn't help but wonder if the three captains would appreciate her charms. The plunging neckline of her dress and the way her corset whittled her waist displayed her assets to their best advantage, but what if they found her lacking? Would they call off their arrangement with the captain and crew of the *Ocean's Knave*?

She shook her head no. Gaston had told her this carnal meeting was to prove that he was not taking orders from Frederica, that the situation was the other way round and she did *his* bidding. Remembering that helped her feel more at ease.

Leaving a foul-tempered Gaston back on the ship, Hatch accompanied her to the inn. Being that it was only mid-day, he'd already drank more rum than was his habit. When he'd bid her farewell his words had been slurred and his good eye glassy. Frederica hoped he'd take a nap and awake in better spirits.

In the meantime, she tried to quiet her nerves. Hatch had given her an orange and she ate the succulent fruit along the way, grateful that she didn't feel the need to converse with Hatch as they walked. The pair had an easy companionship and Hatch was a quiet man anyway.

When they reached the Lucky Sloop, Hatch laid a hand on her shoulder. "You may not always see me, Missy, but I will be there to see they do not harm you. If you should like to stop any proceeding you need only call out my name, and I will see to it your wishes are enforced." With that he silently pulled a blade from his back pocket and ran it in front of his throat in a mock demonstration of what he would do to anyone who tried to harm her.

Frederica gave him a wan smile. "Your protection is greatly appreciated my friend, but I deem it will prove unnecessary."

Hatch emitted a low growl and opened the door for her. She took a deep breath and prayed that she was right and these men would not harm her.

The proprietor showed them to a back room she'd never seen. To her surprise it looked more like a meeting room than a bed chamber. She sighed with relief. Perhaps these men had no intention of bedding her. Perhaps they'd merely been testing Gaston to gauge his reaction.

She suddenly felt a cool sweat bead up on her skin, and she feared she might faint. She looked around and tried to gather her bearings. She needed to sit down.

“Miss Beauchamp, why don’t you take a seat?” Miles Appling rushed toward her and helped her to a chair. There were several thick, wooden chairs surrounding a large table in the center of the room.

Pugwash loitered in the corner, a mug in one hand his pipe in the other. Edward Chatham slid into the seat next to her and offered her something to drink.

“I’ll have some rum,” she said.

Chatham smiled shyly and poured her a cup from a bottle sitting on the table.

Appling refilled his mug from another bottle which she assumed was whiskey and stood beside her. Fixing his gaze on hers he said, “We are so pleased you could join us, Mademoiselle Beauchamp.” Then he lifted a lock of her long brown hair and ran his fingers across a string of shells that danced in her mane. “Lovely,” he remarked.

“Thank you,” was all she could manage. In polite company his gesture would have been rude, but it made her stomach flutter with excitement. Perhaps they were going to take her after all.

Pugwash approached the table. He was not classically handsome like the other two men, but there was something interesting about the way he carried himself. He was a confident man, and Frederica had no trouble seeing how he could inspire boatloads of men to follow him. The man was a clearly a born leader. He winked at Frederica bawdily. “Have a drink, lass. We’re here to have a little fun, not to worry you.”

She let go of the breath she hadn’t realized she’d been holding. “Cheers!” she said and lifted her cup to theirs. “And you may call me Frederica.”

The men banged cups and they all drank up.

The men asked her about herself and she told them the story of how she’d been captured by a band of nasty pirates and how Gaston had helped her escape. When she was finished with her tale, Appling shook his head and chuckled. “That Galette’s one lucky bastard. We’ll do well to have him on our side.”

“Aye,” the other men agreed and each of them raised a glass. Miles suggested they play a game, one that would make Frederica more comfortable. Relieved they were behaving so civilized, she nodded in agreement and Chatham pulled out a deck of cards.

The rules of the game were that Frederica would play a round against each of the men in turn. Both players would draw a card from the deck and the player with the lowest card was deemed the loser. The penalty for losing was that the loser would have to remove an item of clothing.

Frederica immediately recognized that if she had to play each man one after the other each of them only getting a turn every third round, the odds were stacked so she would be stark naked before any

of the men. She considered protesting, but instead took a sip of liquid courage and smiled nervously. No sense postponing the inevitable.

Chatham was up first and he drew a ten.

Frederica pulled out the jack of spades. "I won!" Frederica exclaimed, surprised. She'd been convinced the men would cheat and she expected to lose every hand. It bolstered her spirits to see she'd been wrong. "You must remove something, Captain Chatham," she teased getting into the spirit of the game.

"Edward," he said. "Please call me Edward."

She nodded her assent. The rum had loosened him up. The boyish nerves he'd shown when they'd first met had been replaced with an easy flirtatiousness. He stood up and with a slow, sly grin he removed his white shirt, keeping his eyes on Frederica the whole time.

Unconsciously, she'd begun to fan herself and Pugwash observed, "Getting' a bit 'ot in 'ere, ain't it, lass?"

A giggle accompanied by a hiccup erupted from Frederica's throat, and that made all the men laugh. Frederica stared at Edward's frame. He was tall, not as tall as Hatch, but taller than most men, and every inch of his body was covered in lean, sinewy muscles. His breeches slung low on his hips allowing her a glimpse of the well-defined "v" that pointed south and hinted at unthinkable carnal delights. She felt her pussy grow moist, her nipples hardened.

Edward saw her reaction and smiled at her conspiratorially.

She played the next round against Pugwash. To her surprise she won again, her seven beating his two. Pugwash set down his pipe and removed the close-fitting, serviceable shirt he wore. Without paying Frederica much attention he went back to blowing smoke rings and drinking his whiskey.

Undressed from the waist up Pugwash was surprisingly fit. He didn't have the exquisitely defined stomach and arms that Edward did, but he possessed a solid, compact yet strong physique. The muscles bulging from his arms, shoulders and neck muscles made him appear powerful and intimidating. Frederica made a mental note not to cross him.

Next up was Appling and he beat her with an Ace trumping her four. When she took off a boot and set it daintily aside, Edward groaned, and Pugwash grumbled.

Appling gave her an understanding look and the game continued.

Chatham lost again and he took Frederica's lead in removing his boots. Eager to move things along he took off both boots during his turn.

Pugwash won the following round and Frederica removed her other boot.

Miles Appling won his round again and Frederica puzzled over

what to remove next. She should have brought more clothing, an extra layer to remove at this point would have been helpful. But, wasn't the whole point of this meeting for her to service these men? They were being terribly chivalrous in their treatment of her. They could have easily stripped her down upon arrival, but instead they showed consideration by allowing her to become more comfortable with them during this slower, more thoughtful process.

Her nerves jangled in her stomach, but in the spirit of sportsmanship Frederica took a deep breath and asked, "Captain Appling, would you please unfasten my dress?"

"Please, call me Miles."

"Miles," she said, standing.

Brushing her hair to the front, he began unfastening her dress. His fingers were quick and nimble with the tiny buttons, which told her he was no stranger to undressing a woman.

"There," she said sitting back down in her corset and petticoats.

"Well blow me down!" Pugwash exclaimed. "You are quite the beauty, lass."

Despite herself she flushed at the compliment, "Why thank you Captain Pugwash."

He waved a hand in front of his face. "Just Pugwash, if you please," he said, tilting his head in respect.

"Certainly," Frederica responded.

It was Chatham's turn again and since he'd lost two in a row he asked Frederica to choose her card first this time, hoping that would change his luck. She drew the queen of hearts and he drew another ten. "Blast it," he pretended to be upset but he removed his stockings. The only thing he had left to remove were his breeches.

Frederica giggled. She had to admit she was having fun with these pirates who, for the most part, were behaving like proper gentlemen.

Pugwash won his turn, and Frederica removed one of her petticoats. Usually she viewed having so many skirts as a hindrance, always complicating matters, but today she valued them highly.

The game came around to Appling and he won again. The rest of them eyed him sharply as he sat fully dressed, politely sipping his drink. "My apologies," Appling said. "Do you require any assistance, Frederica?" he asked with a mischievous grin.

She laughed and waved him off as she removed her last petticoat. All she had left were her corset and her shimmy beneath.

Edward eyed her expectantly. There was no question that at the end of their turn one of them would be baring some private parts. "Ladies first," he said.

Frederica drew a three and winced.

Confident, Edward drew his card. A pained expression crossed his face, and he threw the card down on the table - the two of diamonds.

Pugwash slapped his knee and erupted into gales of laughter, which then led to a coughing fit.

Frederica snuck a glance at Miles who reacted with a smirk. "Better you than me, Chatham."

"Screw you bastards. What do I care? Maybe I'll have the first go at the lady," he said raising his brow and dropping his pants in the same movement.

Neither his words nor the fact that he stood completely naked a foot away from her unnerved Frederica as she feared they would. Instead she felt desire rise up inside her. She found herself wanting to reach out and touch him.

Before Gaston, she had never seen a naked man. Experiences like this were foreign to her, as they would be to any girl of her class. She'd been raised a proper lady, and proper ladies did not cavort with naked men, or drink and play stripping games with strangers. But somewhere along her journey she'd ceased to be a proper lady. Hell, she'd become a pirate with all the freedom and adventure-seeking that came with it.

She was here to service these men, and Gaston's words resounded in her ears, "Think of it as an adventure." Somewhere deep inside her she mustered up the courage to stand and take a step toward the alarmingly attractive *and naked* Edward Chatham.

Chatham opened his arms to her and as she melted into his arms she said over her shoulder, "Captain Appling, could you please help me unlace my corset?"

Chapter Eight

Closing her eyes, Frederica tilted her head and parted her lips. Edward Chatham's mouth found hers and she tried to lose herself in his kiss. His velvet lips were tentative. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him closer, her palm at the base of his neck.

As her tongue met Edward's she felt the familiar tugging at her back of her corset being loosened. She realized that soon she would be completely naked and sandwiched by two incredibly handsome men and sighed dreamily.

Miles Appling unlaced her corset and as it fell to the ground, she felt his hands gently caressing her shoulders. Coming up from behind, he cupped her now bare breasts and nuzzled her neck. An electric current ran through her body, and her nipples begged for attention.

"So beautiful," Miles said in a low voice.

"Thank you," Frederica replied between Edward's kisses.

Edward loosened his hold on her to allow room for Miles' caresses, but he continued to kiss her. His hands dropped lower, exploring the curve of her hips, and then running them over her ass. She felt Miles' rock-hard erection at the base of her spine and it was suddenly difficult to tell where one man stopped and the other man began. Eyes closed, she embraced the confusion as she was kissed and caressed by the two men. Their attentions intoxicated her, and she moved a hand behind her to stroke Miles' curly, blond hair, encouraging him.

Understanding her message, Miles slid down the rest of her undergarments so that Frederica stood nude between them.

"Hell yeah," she heard Pugwash say from across the room. Out of the corner of her eye she saw him undressing the rest of the way, the pretense of playing cards now behind them. It was time for the main course.

Realizing that Miles was still fully dressed, Frederica pulled her lips away from Edward turned to Miles and said, "I believe it's your turn."

Miles' eyes met hers. "Would you like to help me?" he asked seductively. There was a challenge in his voice, and she was determined to meet it.

"But of course," she said pulling up his shirt, untucking it from his breeches. She unbuttoned a few buttons and he helped her lift it over his head.

The man's physique was incredible. His torso had the definition of Edward's and the strength of Pugwash. The planes of his abdomen were sculpted into so many different muscles that she gasped.

“There ‘e goes. Showin’ off,” Pugwash complained.

Miles ignored him and nodded for Frederica to continue. He sat and offered her a foot. She bent over dutifully, grabbed his boot and pulled. They repeated the process for his other boot and stockings.

Edward must have been admiring her backside for when she stood upright he pressed himself against her rear end and she felt the nudging of his cock against the cleft of her cheeks. She had worried so many men would overwhelm her, but instead the situation aroused her. Being in such close proximity to these men’s cocks made her pulse quicken and her knees want to buckle. She ran her tongue across her bottom lip in anticipation.

Miles stood and removed his breeches to reveal an enormous erection aiming right at her.

Noticing her reaction, Miles fisted his cock with one hand and reached for Frederica’s hand with the other. Instinctively she placed her hand in his and allowed him to wrap her fingers around his velvet pole. With a lusty sigh she leaned into him for a kiss and tugged back and forth on his penis, eliciting a groan of pleasure from his throat.

Miles’ kiss was different from his counterpart. He rested a hand on the small of her back and pulled her to him with a passion Frederica hadn’t expected. His mouth captured hers and his tongue ravaged her mouth, darting in and out, a prelude of what she assumed his cock would do to her pussy later.

“Enough you two,” Pugwash interjected. “Appling, you and Chatham need a lesson in sharing.”

Miles stepped back, reluctantly breaking their embrace. “Sorry Pug.” Then taking Frederica’s hand that had been yanking on him, he led her to the table. “Frederica, would you be so kind as to lay down on the table?”

Her stomach turned over. It was time. So far she’d been managing by interacting with the men individually. Now she would have to handle them all at once. How would she manage? She clenched her fists. If she disappointed them... what then?

“No need to be frightened. I assure you that we will take great care with you my dear,” Miles said helping her onto the table. “That’s it. Lie on your back. Relax and let us take care of you.”

Let them take care of her? Wasn’t the point that she was supposed to take care of them? His words confused her, yet soothed her at the same time.

Pugwash positioned himself at the end of the table and without preamble took her by the legs and pulled her bottom to the edge of the table.

She could see that he too was hard. His penis was shorter and thicker than the other men, which reflected his body style perfectly.

He spread her legs wide apart unceremoniously and she expected him to enter her immediately, but was surprised when he bent down and ran his tongue from the apex of her sex down her inner lips and into her soft, wet hole.

Smashing his face between her legs, he rubbed his nose against her clit and licked inside her warm, wet channel. Edward held onto one of her legs and Miles held the other. They each used their other hand to caress her. Edward stroked her right arm and Miles fondled her left breast. They stood on either side of the table allowing her to receive attention from three sides.

“Jerk our cocks,” Miles directed. Without hesitation she reached out and grabbed Miles’ and Edward’s cocks, one in each hand performing the movement Gaston had taught her.

Now, as Pugwash worked her cunt with his mouth and she and the other men pleased each other, a serene sense of shared ecstasy filled the room. Functioning as a one carnal machine, the four of them worked as a team toward the goal of shared bliss. The unique experience was heavenly. Edward and Miles both looked down at her with lust-filled gazes so intense that she had to shut her eyes to them. The bliss of it was too much. Behind closed lids she was able to absorb every sensation her body felt and focus on it.

The tension between her legs built with every lap of Pugwash’s soft tongue. He inserted a finger into her cunt and finger-fucked her hard, his tongue riding back and forth over her plumped swollen clit. Just then she felt fingers playing with her nipples, turning them into tight buds of need. Then her nipples were being pinched and pulled, and her clit manipulated into such divine agony that she doubted she could stand much more. Every muscle in her body tightened preparing for her impending orgasm.

She fluttered her eyes open for a moment. The tableau of two men holding her legs splayed, rendering her helpless, the sight of three men all fondling, pinching, sucking, licking, caressing her—all of it together sent her tumbling over the edge.

Her orgasm was sharp, so intense that her legs shook and she writhed beneath them flinging her head from side to side. Animalistic sounds sprang from her mouth, and she jerked for several minutes until her body finally became her own again.

She lay spent on the table vaguely aware of the thin veil of perspiration on her brow and little else. She’d all but forgotten the group of men surrounding her until Miles smoothed her hair back from her forehead and said in a sexy voice, “I told you we would take care of you.”

Pugwash swiped an arm across his mouth, smearing her juices along it. “I do love to dine on a juicy cunt, especially when the owner

is as purty as you.” He handed her a cup and she took a swig of whatever swill it contained. While his words were crass, coming from him they seemed almost charming.

“Now, could we impose upon you to climb onto your hands and knees, Frederica?” Miles asked.

She was embarrassed to hoist her naked ass in the air on a table which now seemed to be serving as a platform or a stage of some sort, but she couldn’t see how she could refuse his request so she complied with wobbly limbs.

Pugwash circled the table, assessing her admiringly. He finally stopped and faced her.

She craned her neck to see what the other men were doing. Edward and Miles were staring at her ass and talking to each other in low voices. She couldn’t hear what they were saying and expected they’d intended it that way. What would they do to her next?

Looking back at Pugwash who held his cock loosely in his hand, she found herself smiling at him despite herself. Edward and Miles were more attractive than he was, but after the mind-numbing orgasm he’d just given her, her esteem for Pugwash was on the rise.

“Frederica, I doubt you’ve taken two men at a time before. Am I mistaken?” Miles asked her as coolly as if he’d asked her if she took sugar in her tea.

She shook her head no.

“I didn’t think so. But you are game? We will make it easy for you.”

Miles had such an assuring way about him, Frederica nodded. “I will do my best,” she said, her voice warbling a bit.

Miles approached her and toyed with one of her brown locks. “You are a treasure of a woman,” he said more to her than to the room, then, “That is all we can ask, isn’t it gentlemen?”

The other men rumbled their assent and Miles motioned to Pugwash. “Climb onto the table Pug and allow the lady to return the favor.”

“Aye,” Pugwash said before climbing onto the table. He knelt in front of her, and opened so his cock and balls were directly in front of her face. His cock looked hard as steel and droplets of precum glistened on the tip.

A drafty breeze blew by her ass, and the chill made her shudder.

“Poor dear,” Edward cooed. “She’s cold. I know just how to warm her up.” His fingers entered her sopping pussy. He pressed in hard and fast, stirring up her juices to the point she was sure they were running down his arm.

Then he removed them and she felt his wet digits trace circles around her asshole. Her gut clenched. Her mind went back to the anal

training with Gaston. This was the part that frightened her.

His finger pressed inside her tiniest hole and the tight ring of muscles bore down on the intrusion. Edward moved in and out. At first it hurt, but after a few moments it became more bearable, until finally it felt good. Frederica was surprised to hear herself moan with pleasure.

Miles took her hair and caught it all in his hand. “Frederica,” he said, and then pulled on the mass of hair. At first she felt more pressure than pain, but then her scalp began to sting and she prayed he wouldn’t pull any harder.

She glanced up at him, panting as Edward plundered her asshole, “Yes?” she asked, her voice trembling.

“Take him in your mouth,” he said, nodding at Pugwash’s erect cock that bobbed near her face.

She nodded agreeably.

“And I will fuck that delicious little pussy of yours,” Miles said with a gleam in his eye.

Her heart skipped a beat and she bent her head so she might take Pugwash’s eager cock into her mouth. She suckled the head and heard Pugwash groan with excitement. Taking her head in his hands, he bobbed her mouth up and down on his shaft until he hit the back of her throat.

She mewled a scattered noise when another finger entered her ass. Soon after, she felt several fingers enter her cunt. Poised like a statue on a pedestal, Frederica lost herself in the sensation—every hole she had was filled, and the sensation was punctuated by a smack to her bottom.

Chapter Nine

With every hole filled Frederica found it difficult to concentrate on sucking the cock in her mouth. The sensations of being poked, prodded, slapped, and fucked overwhelmed her, and her only option was to surrender to these men and trust them to “take care of her” as they’d promised.

To this point they had made good on that promise, so she put herself in their hands and allowed herself to let go and enjoy their attentions. In the back of her mind was the knowledge that Hatch was somewhere close by to protect her. She had not seen him, but she hadn’t expected to. He operated more like a ghost than a human.

“Switch places with me, Pug. And break in that delectable pussy for me,” Miles said.

“That’s one sweet little mouth,” Pugwash said, withdrawing with a groan filled with regret. He moved around to the back of the table and suddenly her holes were empty. She exhaled, her body craving the fullness once again.

“Why the frown?” Miles asked as he climbed onto the table and lay on his back.

Frederica shrugged, unable to find the words to answer him.

“Feels good, doesn’t it?” he persisted.

She averted her eyes. It was one thing to allow them to have her, quite another to admit how much she was enjoying it.

“It’s alright. It’s supposed to,” he said, tugging on a lock of her hair. Then, instead of putting his cock in her face as Pugwash had, Miles asked her to straddle him. “Can you remain on all fours?” the attractive captain asked.

She nodded and held herself up on her knees. Miles lay underneath her, his cock straining upward. She glanced at his erection then back at him. Holding herself up with her hands she had no way to stimulate him. He read her thoughts and eased her mind, “Don’t concern yourself, my dear. We are only getting started,” he said running a hand through her hair which spilled over his muscular chest.

His words sent a chill through her. What more would they do to her?

She felt a wet mouth on her brazenly displayed pussy. Inwardly she smiled—Pugwash.

His tongue stroked her from clit to slit before she felt her swollen button being pulled into his mouth. His teeth grazed that concentrated jumble of nerves and she trembled with desire. She strained against his face, desperate for something to fill her needy cunt.

As if he heard her silent pleas, Pugwash stood and pulled her ass back onto his cock. Her legs fell like a frog above Miles and she felt his hardness against her mound. Pugwash entered her swiftly, the force causing her to fall forward. Her breasts and stomach pressed against Miles' torso. His eyes burned bright as he cupped the base of her neck and pulled her lips to his.

"Take him inside you," Miles growled in her ear, and a white-hot jolt of lust sliced through her body. Pugwash took her by the hips and impaled her onto his thick, meaty member. He filled her, the sensation of her stretching walls almost too exquisite to bear.

She thought she might drown in Miles' kiss, his tongue swirling with hers in a wicked dance. The walls of her pussy stretched to accommodate Pugwash's thickness, and the pacing of his thrusts dictated the tempo of her kisses with Miles.

The world around her seemed to have melted away, leaving her with only the hum of the moment. As Pugwash pulled his cock out and pushed back inside her hungry depths he used long strokes, teasing her, making her want more and more. Greedily, she groaned into the mouth of her enticing, blond lover. Miles caressed the skin of her back and held her to him.

Without warning she felt a smack on her ass. Edward?

Her cries grew louder and Miles' strong arms held her so that Pugwash and Edward might toy with her as they saw fit.

Edward's blows smarted but she managed to handle them. Gaston had introduced her to the intoxication that the combination of pleasure and pain could bring, and that experience was serving her well.

Thwack! Edward covered her backside thoroughly, and she guessed her ass would be the fiery pink-red of a blazing sunset by now.

With a burst of energy Miles lifted himself onto his elbows. "Damn! I must have you, Frederica. My turn, Pugwash." An electric current zipped between her and the bold captain and Frederica wondered with exquisite anticipation what he would do next.

With a mild grumble Pugwash withdrew his cock and moved to the side of the table.

Miles took her chin in his hand, rousing her mind from the hazy, lust-filled cloud where it had been. Her eyes met his and Frederica felt the heat intensify between them. The other men were pleasant enough lovers—Edward with his boyish, dark charms and tall, sinewy physique, and Pugwash with his adorable gruffness and talented tongue. But it was Miles with whom Frederica felt the most aroused. There was a palpable chemistry between them that, at that moment in time, made her want him with every fiber in her being.

“Ride me,” Miles ordered her.

Those two little words lit a fire in her belly and she cast her legs astride him, eager to feel the tumescence of his enormous cock fill her. She placed her hands on his rock-hard abdomen and traced the dips and well-defined ridges under her fingertips. Her pussy creamed at the intoxicating contradiction of smooth and rippled, soft and hard.

She rose to a kneeling position and ground her pelvis against his. His cock reached up for her warm crevice, and rubbing her outer lips against him, she realized how slick she already was from Pugwash’s invasion. The outrageous naughtiness of allowing two men’s cocks inside her one after the other sent a little thrill through her, and she giggled to herself thinking of the depraved secret she now shared with these three men.

Just as she impaled herself on the stiff cock between her legs, she felt a tap on her left shoulder. When she turned her head, Edward crushed his mouth against hers. As her pussy stretched around Miles’ immense girth she offered Edward a passionate, over the shoulder kiss. Edward’s hands traveled across her chest, his fingers played with her already erect nipples, pinching and twisting, making her tongue search his mouth for relief.

Leaving a trail of kisses down her neck, Edward continued caressing her breasts and whispered in her ear, “I want your ass.”

Her gut and her asshole clenched in unison. This was what she feared. Gaston had warned her they would want to fuck both her holes at the same time, all of them in fact. She couldn’t imagine how her body could possibly accommodate all that, but as concerned as she was, she couldn’t see herself saying no now and spoiling things. She braced herself and hoped it wasn’t too difficult to endure.

Sensing her reticence, Edward promised, “I’ll be gentle.”

Frederica bit her lip and nodded to him.

From underneath her Miles pulled her shoulders roughly out of Edward’s grasp toward him. He caught her in another kiss as he lifted her hips up and down on his steel rod.

“Fuck him, Frederica. I want to watch you fuck him,” Edward said behind her. Being given such orders ignited a fire inside her, and Frederica raised and lowered herself down onto Miles, their mouths continuing to nip and suckle at each other.

Soon the now-familiar but nerve-wracking feeling of Edward’s finger was in her ass again. Refusing to be cowed, Frederica focused on the oral pursuits that occupied her and Miles. Then she felt Edward grab her hips and a larger, more insistent presence nudged at her rear entry. When Edward pushed through the tight circular muscle that guarded the opening of her hole, she shouted into Miles open mouth then buried her face in his neck.

"It will get easier in a few minutes," Edward said reassuring her.

Miles stroked her hair. "He's right. It will," Miles said, echoing the sentiment.

"Aye," Pugwash added and stroked her back softly. The tender gesture from the hard man was such an unexpected juxtaposition that it distracted her for a moment. It gave her a new insight into the small man, and touched her.

As Edward pushed farther into her ass Frederica whimpered. How much longer would the agony continue? She clutched Miles' upper arms with all her strength, unsure if she could stand the pain.

Then Edward's cock slid backward. He'd oiled it with something so that it slid out then in more smoothly and finally, slowly, her muscles began to work in tandem with him.

"You fuck her, and I'll hold her," Miles directed Edward.

Edward did just that, slowly piercing and stretching her tiniest hole as her cunt was impaled on Miles' thick cock. The movements made her come up and away from Miles, his cock sliding in and out of her at the same time, each thrust stimulating both her holes.

Passion overtook her and Frederica kissed and nipped on Miles' thick, muscular neck until Pugwash took her by the hair and lifted her head. He pulled her to the side of the table where her lips were level with his swollen cock. Still controlling her head with her hair, he said, "Suck on this, princess."

Again, being given sexual commands aroused her, gave her a warm tipsy feeling in her stomach. She opened her mouth obediently, licked his shaft and took him as deeply into her mouth as she could manage while still breathing.

The world slowed down, and she'd been reduced to nothing more than a sexual plaything, her body there for the sole purpose of pleasing this group of men. At the same time, the things they did to her felt incredible, and she reveled in the sensations. One cock fucked her ass while another fucked her pussy, and now her only other hole was filled with cock. Becoming an instrument of these men's pleasure made her feel as alive as she ever had before. For the first time she wondered if Gaston had known how much she would enjoy the experience. He must have, and she must remember to thank him for arranging this tryst which furthered her carnal education, a task Gaston had always taken quite seriously.

The pain in her ass had morphed into pleasure. Her pussy thrummed with need and she relished the feel of her ass being pummeled at the same time.

Miles' hand crept between their sandwiched bodies and tweaked her nipple. "Ride me, Frederica. Ride me now," he growled.

She wanted to comply, but how? How could she possibly move?

Her entire body was controlled by their movements—Pugwash fucking her throat, Edward fucking her ass, and Miles pinching her and thrusting up into her from underneath.

Edward grabbed her hips and helped her put more weight on her knees then he assisted her, lifting her cunt up and down onto Miles' cock. In the process he moved in and out of her ass. She tried to keep Pugwash in her mouth, but Edward pulled her in the other direction.

As she was inched backward, Pugwash gripped his cock. He jerked it while watching her fuck the other two men simultaneously. Then he closed his eyes and tugged his cock until a stream of white fluid flew in her direction, most of it landing on her full silky breasts.

The smell of cum hit her nostrils, and the debauchery of the scene invigorated her. With renewed vigor she turned her energy to riding Miles and taking Edward's punishing cock in her ass at the same time. The feeling of being filled was overwhelming and though the movements among the three of them were small, they were extreme in their intensity. It only took a few minutes of hard fucking before Frederica felt on the verge of climax. It approached and crashed over her like the tallest wave in the ocean—building, building, building, until it finally broke. She rode with gusto, bliss spilling out of every pore, and she hoped it would never end.

Once she fell over the edge, Miles reached up and held her torso up by her shoulders, and Edward steadied her bottom. Then both men ramped up the speed, Miles fucking her from below and Edward from behind. Frederica thought she might be smashed in two, but she could only moan, thinking if one had to be split in two, there was no better way to do it.

Moments later both men pulled out and ejaculated upon her. Edward leaked his silky fluid on her ass, and Miles shot his onto her abdomen. She watched lazily as some of Miles' semen ran down the sides of his cock.

Frederica collapsed next to Miles who curled her into the crook of his arm.

Pugwash had begun dressing, and Edward patted her on the hip. Shy again, he thanked her before donning his clothes.

"Will you clean my cock, beautiful Frederica?" Miles asked staring into her eyes, his fingers playing with her hair.

She knew what he meant for Gaston often asked her to mop up his seed with her mouth. Shifting her position, she brought her head down over his cock, which stood at half-mast. Sucking it into her mouth, she licked the sticky bitter substance from it and made a great show of swallowing it.

If this was to be the last task she performed for these men she wanted to finish her work in a memorable fashion.

Chapter Ten

Gaston paced back and forth on the rough cobblestone street outside the entrance to the Lucky Sloop. He wasn't certain how long Frederica had been inside with Appling and the rest, but whatever the length it was too long for him. He'd drunk more than he should have that morning and had fallen asleep briefly. One of the crew members awoke him to inquire about a task Gaston had given them. Too late Gaston realized he'd missed Freddie's departure. Now, as he stood under the swaying palms, his head pounded and he felt a longing for Frederica that could only compare with the desperation that scrawny excuse for a cat must have experienced only days prior.

Kicking a pebble across the walk, he wondered how he could possibly have agreed to subject his precious Frederica to the carnal demands of a group of men? Pirates even! On the surface the captains appeared civilized enough, but under the surface he knew twisted, even cruel intentions could lurk in the hearts of men. Men, as a lot, were savages, he decided running a hand over his dreads. What had he done?

A crash came from the building that served as a kitchen for the inn. The noise brought him back into the present, reminding him that when Frederica and her lovers left the building he would have to make himself scarce. It would not do to have the men suspect he harbored excessive concerns over Frederica's welfare, or worse that he was jealous of their attentions to her. No, he must come across nonplussed, unruffled by the affair.

He stroked his chin, not at all certain that he could exact an indifferent countenance on the outside when he was a churning tangle of emotions on this inside. He felt as if he would choke on his jealousy, and his throat threatened to close. This had him constantly tugging on his collar searching for more air. His normally hearty appetite had left him, and he wasn't sure he had eaten anything since the agreement.

He balled his fists. The thought of the other men touching Frederica, kissing her, entering her, fucking her... He stopped himself for fear he would retch. When he'd offered her up for the other men's pleasure he'd been thinking with his head, searching for a solution that would quash their last-minute objections. Sadly, in doing so he had ignored his heart.

It took some time for what he'd done to sink in, how he'd sabotaged his own relationship with Frederica. He was accustomed to her being the one who pined for him. Now the shoe was on the other

foot, and it infuriated him. Because something deep inside him told him that even though she had agreed to perform these duties at his behest, the entire situation had made him realize how much she meant to him, how much he needed her, and wanted her all to himself. And it irked him to feel so intensely about a woman.

His mind wandered back to what must be happening inside. Even though Hatch was present as a bodyguard for Frederica and he knew the giant would not allow her to be harmed physically, Gaston worried about how the tryst would affect her mentally. This morning she'd been frightened. What if the experience proved too much for her? God forbid he ruined her, his precious Frederica.

He shook his head as he paced. There had been no choice in the matter. Had he allowed the other men to witness his true feelings for Frederica, they would have walked away from the bargaining table—they'd said as much. His counterparts' ships were crucial to the survival and protection of every man aboard the *Ocean's Knave*, as well as Frederica herself. It was an untenable situation, and he could think of no other recourse other than to allow the men to use her for their amusement. Wiping his brow, he only hoped he'd be able to pick up the pieces that were left when they were finished with her.

He heard the creak of the door opening and he hid behind a large palm tree. Men's laughter carried over to him and he peered around the tree's husk-covered trunk. The three men were exiting the inn. They had the distinct look of men leaving a whorehouse. Pugwash lit his pipe and clapped Chatham on the back. Chatham laughed, and Appling adjusted his breeches.

Gaston felt an infuriating mixture of anger and helplessness bubble up in his blood. He wanted to rush over and cut the men down where they stood, but he forced himself to stay hidden. Summoning every ounce of restraint he had, he flattened his back against the tree and worked to breathe normally. Several minutes later, he heard the door open again. He craned his neck to see, and saw Frederica with Hatch walking alongside her.

In his imagination he had pictured she would re-emerge from the encounter a wreck—sad, possibly even tearful. He'd envisioned a forlorn Frederica, damaged and emotionally beaten, perhaps even angry.

Nothing could have prepared him for what he saw.

A glorious-looking Frederica practically skipped down the path. Her cheeks boasted a rosy glow, and a satisfied smile stretched wantonly across her face. Her gait was slightly wobbly and she looked as though she were in the middle of a particularly pleasing daydream.

It had been his intention to come out from behind the tree and comfort her as she passed, but he found himself unable to move. His

boots suddenly felt as heavy as if they'd been full of wet sand. He tried to call out to her, but when he opened his mouth nothing came out.

She and Hatch passed by, showing no signs of having seen him. As he watched Frederica's hips sway into the distance, he stomped a foot in irritation. Damn them all for making him feel impotent and unable to control the situation.

Adjusting the lapels of his coat, he marched into the inn. He could use another shot of rum.

* * *

Frederica put the encounter with Appling, Chatham, and Pugwash behind her. It had been amazing in many ways, introducing her to how other men made love, giving her a broader sexual experience, but it had been a one-time encounter. The day after the rendezvous she'd replayed what had happened over and over in her head. She'd gotten aroused again and even felt herself blushing. Remembering what the men had done to her filled her with a deliciously warm feeling, and she'd dipped her finger between her legs and pleased herself thinking about it.

However, a few days had passed and life was returning to usual. The crew was making ready for their next voyage. Supplies were being readied, and she had found a seamstress in the area who had fitted her for some new clothes. In addition to a couple of dresses, she'd also ordered some breeches and shirts that were not unlike those Gaston and the other captains wore, except they were decidedly more feminine.

Yes, life was moving along and everything was back to normal with the exception of Gaston. He had been scarce since her tryst with the men, and when he had been around he'd been sullen and disagreeable. He continued to drink more than usual, and at night he'd been sleeping outside on deck rather than in the bunk with her. When asked about it he waved her off saying he had every right to sleep where he wanted, that if he chose to sleep in a tree it wasn't her concern. Though she didn't appreciate his recent foul mood, Frederica had shared a space with an ill-tempered captain before and she knew how to avoid conflict in such scenarios. She assumed he was feeling stressed about the upcoming voyage and hoped he would be back to normal once they were again at sea. They would sail in a matter of days, and though she told herself he'd be back in her arms by then, she wasn't entirely confident that would be the case.

Chapter Eleven

Frederica sat on the cot in Gaston's quarters braiding her hair. When she'd lived in England she had often twined ribbons into her long locks, but recently she had replaced the ribbons with strands of tiny round shells. She had taken the idea for her hairstyle from Hatch's necklace and she had spent hours this week stringing the tiny shells into long strands which she then braided into her hair. The shimmer of the shells against her chocolate brown locks gave her an exotic appearance. She considered herself.

As she continued to braid her hair, she wondered what sort of mood Gaston would be in when he returned to the cabin. Ever since the day of her dalliance with Appling, Chatham, and Pugwash he'd been grumbling around and behaving unpleasantly. This confused Frederica because she'd thought that once she did her duty with the men the alliance would be strengthened and Gaston would be pleased. After all he had been the one who arranged the tryst and essentially forced her to go. He couldn't be upset with her. He'd given her no choice in the matter. They hadn't discussed whether or not she had enjoyed the experience so she knew he couldn't be angry with her for enjoying it if he didn't know.

Her mind went back to that afternoon and a shiver of excitement zipped through her as she recalled the feel of the men's lips and tongues on her, their hands on her skin, their cocks in her...

Her reverie was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was Hatch and in his arms she was surprised to see the skinny white cat from town.

"Hatch! You brought him!" she squealed with delight. "Where did you find him?" She reached out and took the bundle of fur from him. The cat purred and nudged his head under her hand urging her to pet him. Happiness bubbled up inside her and she giggled.

Hatch bestowed a rare smile upon Frederica and the cat. "At the inn. He hadn't gone far. I've been trying to fatten him up for you."

Frederica pulled on his shoulder, and Hatch bent just enough for her to place a chaste kiss on his cheek. "Thank you, Hatch. He will make a wonderful addition to the crew, I just know it."

Hatch made a snorting noise and exited her chamber.

Frederica danced around the room with the kitty. "What shall I name you?"

The cat meowed in response, and she ran through a list of possible names, "Bernard, Ronald, no. Maybe more of a cat name. Pouncer?" She knit her brows thoughtfully and lay down on the bed with her new pet.

She stroked his smooth yet slightly matted coat while considering the possibilities. When she thought the cat had fallen asleep she went back to entwining the strands of shells into her hair. She held one up in the air and the cat hopped up and started batting it in the air with his paws. This made Frederica laugh and she continued trying to braid her hair with the acrobatic assistance of the cat who balanced himself on his back legs and tried to swat at her braid each time she moved one strand of hair over another.

Just then the door flung open and a disheveled Gaston stepped through the threshold. He noticed the feline presence on his bed and a look of disgust crossed his face. "What is that thing doing here?"

"I know you said I couldn't have him, but..." she protested, not wanting to get Hatch in trouble for bringing the cat onto the ship.

"Bloody hell. What is happening? This is my quarters, my castle if you will. Is nothing sacred?" Gaston blustered and picked up the cat and tossed it outside the room onto the ship's deck. Frederica knew better than to fuss about it now. She'd find the cat later. They were surrounded by water and she doubted the cat would try to swim anywhere.

"Freddie! Didn't I forbid you from bringing that animal onto my ship?"

"I'm sorry, master," she said getting up to help him off with his coat in an attempt to appease him. "I'm certain he will earn his keep as a mouser."

He pushed her hands away, refusing to be placated. Despondently, Gaston sank to his knees in front of her and clutched her legs.

"Gaston, what is it?" she asked confused.

"Nothing, only that I've missed you." He lifted his eyes to her and she bent to kiss him. His mouth pressed against hers insistently, his tongue swirling in her open mouth. She tasted the salt air on his lips and inhaled his scent, so masculine and unique to him. They kissed for awhile. His mouth felt good to her, like home. She had missed him too.

Moments later she pulled away, still holding her unfinished braid in her hand. "Master, might I finish up this small braid first?" She batted her eyelashes flirtatiously.

"By all means." He rose and settled next to her on the cot, his weight sinking into the mattress, causing her body to shift toward his. He slid an arm around her waist and leaned in to kiss her neck just below her ear. Hmm, one of her favorite spots.

Distracted, she clumsily did up the last quarter of the braid she was working on, tying it off at the end with the leftover fishing line. Gaston left a line of kisses in his wake as he moved from her throat to

her bosom. "Get undressed," he growled tugging at her blouse.

She stood and began to remove her skirts and blouse. Gaston hurriedly unlaced the back of her corset, then he ripped off her shimmy and it fell to the ground, leaving her completely naked. With a sly smile he took off his shirt and unfastened his breeches.

"May I help you with your boots, master?" Frederica inquired.

"Yes," he said, his eyes savoring every inch of her body.

She knelt and pulled off his boots one by one. Then, her face between his legs and knowing how much he loved her to service him with her mouth she tilted her head expectantly.

"Now suck my cock, but I want you to do it slowly, with your hands behind your back."

Obediently, she grabbed her right wrist in the palm of her left hand behind her back. Swinging her hair behind her shoulder and out of the way, she leaned in as he pushed the fabric of his breeches aside giving her access to his engorged cock, the purple veins of its underside throbbing with excitement. She licked the head, paying special attention to the frenulum before dousing the bulbous tip with her saliva. She then coated his length with soft caresses of her tongue and slipped him between her lips. Opening her throat wide, she dipped her head to take him all the way to the back of her throat.

Gaston groaned. She knew that he relished the feel of his cock bumping the stopping point of her mouth, and she answered with a garbled moan of her own. Suckling him awakened a wanton lust inside her, making her wet and ravenous for him. She bobbed up and down on his cock for several minutes until he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her off of him.

"Did I please you, master?" She looked up at him with a saucy smile, certain that she had.

"Of course. I've taught you well, girl. Now get up and lie down on the bed, arms above her head." He rose and went to a chest in the corner of the small room.

A little thrill ran through her as she complied. This usually meant he was going to restrain her, and she adored that.

As she had hoped, he returned with a coil of rope and began tying her wrists together. She loved the feel of the rope against her skin. It had a unique smell and she'd grown to the point where the smell of rope alone aroused her. Gaston usually took his time, draping the rope across her breasts sensuously, but tonight he was all business as he secured the ropes to an iron ring he'd bolted to the wall. "Spread your legs for me, wench."

She opened her thighs, but he smacked them and pushed them wider apart. "That's better," he said.

Helpless, Frederica lay on her back wondering what he had in

store for her this evening. As a lover he was many things, and boring was never one of them.

He took a riding crop off the wall and struck it against his leg then tested it with his opposing hand.

Frederica wriggled in her bindings as her anticipation increased. She both loved and fretted over the crop. The pain it inflicted was bearable and often increased her arousal, but if he used it too hard or too frequently in the same spot it could downright hurt. She hoped tonight he would use it in a pleasurable way.

"I see you jumping around over there." He raised an eyebrow rakishly. "Are you looking forward to me using this on you?" he chuckled.

"Yes, master," she said. By now her nipples puckered and her pussy creamed with need. Even though he had her spread her legs wide for him regularly, it never failed to excite her. It felt incredibly naughty to expose her most private parts so brazenly. He knew that she loved every minute of it, that it aroused her to rebel against the societal mores she'd been brought up to adhere to.

"I'll wager you are."

He came closer and gently traced the curve of her breasts one after the other with the tip of the crop. The tickling sensation made gooseflesh rise on her arms and legs, and her already excited nipples tightened into hard little buds.

He brought it down with a sharp *fwap* to her breast and his eyes twinkled as he watched her come alive under the touch of his tool.

She took a deep breath and found that submissive place within herself, settling into herself, ready for whatever punishment Gaston chose to bestow upon her.

A few more blows of the crop rained down on her chest and midsection. Each one delivered a zip of light pain through her nervous system, and her increased heart rate thrummed in her ears.

Gaston moved his ministrations to her legs, swatting the tops of her thighs, then the flesh of her calves, and ending with smacks to the soles of her feet. These strikes got her attention as the crop stung her feet.

When he tapped at her inner thighs inching closer and closer to her aching mound she felt as though she might simply melt into the mattress beneath her. Her teeth closed over her lower lip, and she held her breath silently praying that he would touch her *there* at her very core. She ached for his touch, and her muscles clenched in anticipation as she willed him to use his crop on the delicate petals of her female flower.

As if reading her mind he brought down the crop on the top of her mound then slapped at her pussy lips, already swollen with desire.

The blow smarted, and she yelled as much from her relief at being touched there as from any pain.

He swatted her breasts again, maintaining her nipples' excited state, and then he went back to working her pussy over with his crop. Finally, he stopped long enough to inspect his subject. Entering her with his index finger, he swirled around her channel, scraping against her ringed walls until she could hear the swishing sounds of her juices as he inserted another finger.

Curling his fingers up against the soft, sensitive button at the top of her front wall, she jerked at the intensity of the sensation. He massaged the spot from inside her with one hand then dropped the crop and pressed firmly against her pelvis from the outside with his other hand. She moaned with an ecstasy so intense that she wasn't sure she could stand it. The pressure was too much, but before she had a chance to complain, she reached the edge of the precipice and toppled over it. The gush of fluid from her satiated pussy seeped into the bedsheets and she felt the warm liquid creep under her bottom. She was surprised that she didn't mind the wetness, but she was in another world, that dreamy place you went after exploding into a million rays of rainbowed bliss.

In the afterglow of her climax, she regarded him through half-closed lids and watched him drop his clothes to the floor. He carried a lantern to the bed and placed it on the small chest that served as a makeshift bed stand.

Without preamble he spread her legs wide and swiftly entered her. Her drenched cunt offered him easy access to the depths of her canal, and he drove into her like a man possessed. His strokes were long and languid but powerful, dragging out their pleasure as if he wanted to wring every drop of passion from her. His deliberate pace increased her anticipation by making her wait for him to fill her each time. She writhed underneath him, thinking that his cock plundering her pussy was so delicious she might never be able to get enough. But then he buried himself so deep inside her that she felt the tip of his penis smash into her cervix. The result was the sweet combination of pleasure and pain. It hurt, but she desperately wanted more.

His fingers fisted her hair, and he yanked on it as he fucked her. Her scalp screamed, but her pussy clamped down hard on his cock, her walls contracting around him like a vice. She arched her back and he pinched both her nipples, rolling them between his fingertips. Then he pulled them upward until her cries of lust morphed to something darker.

Then he withdrew, reached over and removed the candle from the lantern. He held it over her body, a devilish look on his face.

She felt her body stiffen, her eyes widen. He'd done this once

before and the experience had been an extreme combination of pleasure and pain. Overall she'd enjoyed it, but she remembered some of the hottest droplets of wax scorching her skin.

"Scared?" he taunted.

She struggled for something to say, but nothing came to her. She couldn't honestly say no, but if she dared to deny it, she worried if he'd think of something even more dastardly to do to her. Yet her pride kept her from admitting to fear.

"What's the matter? Lost your voice?"

"No, sir," she gulped.

Wagging his brow he winked at her as he towered over her, candle poised just above her stomach. "That's alright. Your face tells me all I need to know."

She watched as the first droplet crashed against the pale, sensitive skin of her belly. The liquid fire burned. She winced and prepared for the next one.

In an unexpected but welcome move, Gaston rubbed the tip of his cock around the opening to her pussy. Her hips gyrated, wanting him inside her again. His eyes darkened with desire as he took in the picture of his helpless, wanton captive beneath him.

"Who do you belong to wench?" he asked, anger in his voice.

Another droplet of scalding hot wax splashed onto her breast, and she found herself lifting her chest searching for the next one. Something in the back of her mind told her it was insane to want more of this treatment, but she squelched the intrusive voice and gave in to her cravings.

"You, master. I belong to you," she answered. It aroused her to think of herself as his. His property. His woman to do with as he chose. She realized there was nothing he loved better than dominating her, and she drew in a ragged breath. Exhaling, she realized there was nothing she loved better than allowing him to.

Gaston dripped more wax upon her chest, and then teased her by trailing the fire across her torso all the way below her naval. Frederica wriggled in her bindings and threw her head from side to side, enduring both the pain of the wax and the intense longing to have him sheathed inside her once again. Whimpers of varying decibels sprang from her throat. No longer able to control the sounds she made, she'd been reduced to an animalistic state, no longer caring about anything, completely present in that moment, the sensations felt by her body occupying her total consciousness.

"And you will do only as I command?" Gaston's voice nudged her out of her trance-like state and back to her surroundings.

Unsure what he was referring to she answered dutifully, "Yes, master."

The next hot drip landed on her labia and had her growling and thrashing. By the time he dribbled wax onto her clit her libido was on fire. She thrashed and growled in her bindings as each drop of scalding wax splashed onto her skin. She squeezed her eyes shut and willed herself to endure the intensity of every sensation.

In the darkness she felt Gaston plunge into her. His cock felt as hard as steel as it invaded her warm, pulsating pussy. Every part of her seemed to be on fire and she heard her voice howling into the night, though it sounded like it belonged to someone else.

Scathing hot drops fell onto her erect nipples as he slid deep inside her. The tension within her reached its boiling point, and her body began to tremble. Like a volcano whose slow buildup has been long and rumbling, when the dam burst from her molten core the nerve endings at the center of her sex exploded. Excruciating ecstasy radiated from her center all the way into her extremities, shaking her and filling her with love for the man who had orchestrated such an earth-shattering crescendo.

“You are mine, Frederica. Mine,” he growled into her ear. “And I will do everything in my power to make certain no other man will ever be able please you the way I do,” he said ferociously.

“Only you, master. No one could do that to me except you.” She wanted to stroke his face, but her arms were restrained.

He set down the candle on the nearby table and used both hands on her now. One hand clamped down on her shoulder and used it for leverage to pump into the depths of her cunt. With as much force as he’d ever used, he fucked her hard with quick, staccato strokes. Beads of sweat pearled off his brow and onto her chest, feeling significantly cooler than the wax that had dribbled on her moments ago. He crushed his mouth to hers and his tongue possessed her as frenetically as his cock did until finally, he found his release inside her and stilled, the only sound in the room was that of their labored breathing.

Spent, Gaston wearily untied her from her bindings before collapsing onto the bed next to her. He threw an arm across her and within a minute was snoring.

Frederica hugged him to her and wondered what her friends and family would have thought if they’d ever known what she did behind closed doors. What she allowed Gaston, or even those other men, to do to her.

But that part of her life, the past, faded more and more every day. It took effort to recall that part of her life, the part that included polite society and rules about what was expected of a girl of her standing. Sometimes, it seemed her old life threatened to disappear altogether, its tenuous existence in her mind flickered like Gaston’s candle. It would be so easy to extinguish altogether.

Her memories of her beloved mother, father, and her friend Cassandra were the only reasons for holding onto the past. The life she had with Gaston—sailing the open seas, searching for the next adventure, capturing the next treasure haul—that was the life for her.

For her there was nothing like the feel of the wind whipping against her cheeks and hearing the lookout shout there was another ship ahead. She was addicted to the rush she got from it. Now that she was a pirate, she couldn't imagine a different sort of life. The very notion of tending the home and hearth for a husband and a band of dependent brats set her teeth on edge.

And now she had gotten Gaston back in their bed. With a sigh she drifted off to sleep with the hope he would stay there, and that his black moods would be a thing of the past.

Chapter Twelve

The next morning Gaston found Hatch feeding the scrawny creature who appeared to be the newest member of the crew.

“Get rid of that flea-ridden beast!” Gaston said, uncharitably.

Hatch shook his head. “The crew won’t like that, Capt’n. Neither will missy.”

Drawing himself up to his full height Gaston stood chest to chest with the giant. “That is of no consequence to me. I forbade her from bringing that cat aboard and she disobeyed me.” His temper was riled, and even to his own self he seemed to live in a constant state of malcontent these days.

“I brought him on board, Capt’n,” Hatch said, folding his arms across his chest daring Gaston to rebuke him.

This surprised Gaston. “What? Why would you do that?”

While they were talking, the cat had scampered down along the deck, and now he was playing with some of the crew members several feet away.

“Missy. She was lonely. I don’t like to see her frowning, and that’s all you’ve made her do since we’ve been here.”

Flustered, Gaston tried to object. “That is none of your concern. Freddie is fine.” With a sigh he declared, “She appears to be doing better than the rest of us, actually.”

Hatch shook his head. “You blame missy for your decision. Missy only did as you asked.”

Gaston felt the heat rise in his face. He knew Hatch spoke the truth. That was the problem. He’d instigated the situation and now living with the consequences was proving difficult.

All had gone according to plan. He’d asked Frederica to appease the captains of the other ships and she’d agreed because he’d asked her to. Now Appling, Chatham, and Pugwash were happy and their plans to sail together were moving ahead. The deal was sealed as it were, and not by a handshake, but by the carnal knowledge of Frederica. His Frederica. He balled his fists at the thought.

“I am aware of that,” he spat.

Tired of the giant’s newfound wisdom, he marched toward the other end of the ship to retrieve that blasted feline. He’d remove it. At least that was something he could do.

Two of the men were playing with the bundle of fur, rolling a ball back and forth for it. The cat chased the ball, batting it between its paws, and the men were in stitches.

Gaston shook his head in disgust. Grown men being entertained by a cat. “That thing has to go,” he told them.

“Old Bones ‘ere?” Tagbor asked. “C’mon Capt’n. He’s a regular mate now. ‘e’ll keep Slash company below deck chasin’ them rats.”

“Ya, c’mon Capt’n. ‘e’s part of the crew now.” Several more men cheered.

Disgusted, Gaston turned on his heel and walked away. Apparently he’d been wrong. Nothing remained under his command.

Chapter Thirteen

Three days later, the crews of the *Ocean's Knave*, the *Volusia*, the *Independence*, and the *Greed of Hades* loaded supplies onto their respective ships, ran their last tests, and handled the last repairs. They would be pulling up anchor tomorrow. Gaston's mood remained wretched and Frederica hoped that heading out to sea would cure him of his melancholy.

Amidst all the hustle and bustle on the ship, Captain Miles Appling climbed down the side of the *Ocean's Knave* into a waiting boat. She had not seen him since their tryst, and it surprised her that she didn't feel in the least bit awkward in seeing him again. Frederica waved and called to him.

Miles returned a gallant wave and shouted up to her, "Good morning Miss Beauchamp, how are you? Well, I trust."

She smiled. "Yes, I am well, and yourself?"

He nodded. "It's a glorious day. How would you like a lesson in swordsmanship this afternoon? That is, if you are not otherwise occupied."

Frederica was at loose ends while the crew packed up, and she always seized upon the opportunity to improve her parrying skills. "I'd love that."

They decided on a time and a few hours later she went ashore and met him on the beach. He greeted her with a friendly embrace, and suggested they take off their boots to prevent them from filling with sand, and the lesson began. Perfect, she preferred feeling the sand sift between her toes anyway.

From the start it was clear Miles was serious about instructing her, and his offer was not a ploy to be alone with her. He started by pointing out that while she was an above average with a cutlass, she lacked the upper body strength of most men and that put her at a disadvantage against most opponents. He showed her how she could use her smaller size and quickness to gain an advantage.

The sun beat down on them as Frederica performed the exercises Miles asked of her. After an hour she was sweating, parched and panting for a break. Miles offered her some water from his cask and they sat down on the sand to rest.

"Are you looking forward to our voyage?" he asked, taking a drink of water.

Frederica shrugged.

"I thought you would be more excited to go to Port Royale. Have you ever been?" he asked.

"I have not, and yes, I should like to visit the infamous city."

“And the governor? Are you acquainted with him?”

“No, I suppose it will be a pleasure to meet such an illustrious man.”

“Forgive me, but I had expected a woman of your considerable enthusiasm to be more animated at the prospect of this journey.”

Frederica leaned over and inspected a shell. Finding it to her liking she pocketed it.

She took a deep breath and exhaled. “My apologies, Captain. I find my mind is occupied with other matters.”

“Would it be presumptuous of me to inquire as to what matters?” he asked.

“No, in fact it is rather kind of you to inquire.”

“It has been awhile since I’ve had cause to ask a woman about her thoughts, her troubles...” his voice trailed off.

He picked up a piece of sea bark and tossed it into the ocean. The waves rolled in, lapping at their bare feet. Frederica lifted her skirts, but the hem was already damp. Miles had rolled up his breeches, and they burrowed their toes in the wet sand.

“Is there, was there, a Mrs. Appling?” she asked and realized she did not know his marital status. She should have inquired, but most pirates were single or widowed so she’d just assumed he was. Their occupation was so incompatible with family life that it had not occurred to her he might have been otherwise committed. Not that marital vows stopped men from straying...

He looked up abruptly, “No. No Mrs. Appling. Though there was almost one once.”

“Why Miles Appling! You must tell me.” She patted him on the shoulder. “Tell me about the girl who got away,” she teased.

He looked at her with a raised brow. “Interesting you would choose to state it that way, for that’s exactly what happened.”

“What?”

“I lost her,” he said sighing deeply.

“How?”

“You don’t want to hear the whole story,” he said making a ball with a handful of wet sand. “Anyway, I was asking about you.”

“We’ll talk about me later. First you must tell me about this girl who ran away.” Normally she wouldn’t pry, but it felt like she and Miles had been friends for years.

“There’s not much to tell. She was a maid who worked for my father. When he discovered our relationship he sent her away, told me he’d given her the choice between me or a sack of gold coins, and she chose the coins. Something never sat right with me about the story. I didn’t believe him, in my heart I knew better. I tried to track her down but had no luck. To get away from my father, I joined the Navy and

served with them for several years.”

“Oh Miles, that is terrible,” Frederica said, her hand involuntarily covered her heart.

He nodded. “Several years ago I received word that she had been seen in Nassau working as a servant. Leave it to my father to send her to the other side of the ocean. Such a bastard. That’s why I left the service and began privateering, to find her.”

“And did you?”

“No, not yet, but I will never give up.” His mournful eyes were tinged with hope. “I will search every corner of the earth.”

Frederica’s heart lurched. “How romantic. What is her name, this lady you love so desperately?”

“Josephine.” The corners of his mouth turned up as it formed the word.

“Tell me about her. What is she like?” Frederica asked, drawing a heart in the sand with her finger.

“Blonde. Kind. Beautiful. Spirited.” He laughed, “Not unlike yourself.”

“Me?” she crinkled her nose.

“Yes, you. How many other female pirates do you know?”

She looked up at the sky. “None.”

“Exactly. Frederica you are a rare woman. Rarely in my travels have I found a distraction as lovely as yourself. For a moment you made me forget my heartache.” He sighed. “But only for a moment. Being with a woman brings the ache to the surface, tears at me. I usually forego dalliances with women. It’s easier that way.”

She frowned. “Then why did you ask Gaston to share me with you?”

“See what I mean? Never afraid to ask the difficult question are you?” he asked. “Pugwash had it in his head that Gaston was under your spell. When we asked Gaston about it, he blustered and insisted that you were his slave, under his command. We couldn’t resist calling his bluff and seeing how far he would take his protestations. I have known Gaston for a long time. We used to serve together aboard the *Brimstone*.”

“He never told me that!”

“Probably didn’t think it was important. I’ve never seen Gaston care for a woman before... or anything for that matter. The Gaston with whom I’m acquainted lives life like he has nothing to lose. He was always a risk-taker who gave little thought to consequences. A man like that makes a great pirate, but not such great a lover.”

Frederica shifted uncomfortably on the sand.

Miles continued, “Like Pugwash, I had heard rumors about the way he doted on you. We had to see for ourselves what was the truth.

It didn't make sense, Gaston is so damned independent. To him, freedom is everything. After losing his wife and what happened in the colonies," his voice trailed off. "Well, I've never known him to have ties."

"You mean losing his wife and child during the birth?" she asked.

Miles gave her an odd look and nodded.

"What about Hatch? He has a deep connection with him," Frederica protested.

"I have only recently met the man, so I don't know their history. I only know Gaston has an independent streak that's as wide as a barn."

Frederica giggled and nodded her assent.

"I thought he had given everything he had to the sea with no loyalty to anyone but himself, which is not a bad way for a pirate to be."

Miles' description of Gaston rang true, but it made her feel slightly queasy.

"Do you love him?" Miles asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"How did he manage things after you returned from our tryst?"

"He's been in a foul mood lately. I hardly see him and when I do he's grumpy." She tossed a ball of sand back into the gracefully approaching waves as they crashed near her feet.

"Moody, you say? Since you returned from servicing his mates?"

She nodded, understanding beginning to bloom in her mind. "Do you think he's jealous?" Yes, she should have thought of this before. Unfortunately, her experience with men was quite limited.

"Of course he's jealous. You are his woman, are you not?"

"Yes, but he commanded me to do that. I only did it for him. For us."

Miles pursed his lips and shook his head. "Irrelevant. The heart is not influenced by reason. If it were I wouldn't still be pursuing my long-lost Josephine. My brain," he pointed at his head, "knows it's an improbable quest, but my heart will not listen," he said touching his hand to his chest.

With a sigh, Miles said, "We probably shouldn't have put Gaston through the torture of such an encounter." He chuckled. "But we're pirates, more interested in our own pleasures than in some sort of brethren code. Once off the ship it's whoring and gambling for most."

"Was Gaston like that? When you knew him before?"

He considered this. "I can't swear that he never had a whore, but Gaston was always more interested in treasure than women. He fancied a drink in a tavern same as any man, but I can't remember him being one for whores. He was a bit of a lone wolf, always seemed like he was running from something. Loss, I suppose."

"I merely wondered. When we met he rescued me from the Humphrey's ship, and we were washed up on an island, I fell in love with him. He took some convincing, but I finally got him to agree to allow me to sail with him."

"You are an unusual woman, Frederica. Most gals would be pestering him to settle down and raise babies by now. But you're content to sail the seas as his mistress?"

"Content? I'm thrilled. I don't want to be tied down by apron strings and bawling babies. No thank you. I want adventure, to see the world, find treasure." She gestured at the vast ocean in front of them. "Out there. The world has so much to offer, and I want it all!"

Miles reached over and fingered one of her shell-bedecked locks. "You are a special girl Frederica. I am pleased to have known you." He winked at her. "But you can tell Gaston that I pose no threat to him. I can see that you love him, as I love my Josephine."

"He might prefer to hear it from you," she hedged.

"Now that," he said standing and helping her to her feet, "I doubt very much."

Chapter Fourteen

Gaston met with the three other captains in his alliance aboard the *Ocean's Knave* the day they were to sail. He had to convince them to sail all four ships under a red flag. Pugwash had no problem with the idea, but Appling and Chatham disagreed, thinking it might be too aggressive a stance to take. The flag might be interpreted as the widely feared Jolie Rouge which was flown by only the most violent of pirates. The Jolie Rouge was a message to other ships that the pirates aboard would offer no quarter, and those who opposed them would be shown no mercy.

Gaston's position was that it did no harm to frighten other ships. With three fully manned sloops and the *Independence*, which was a naval cutter that Appling had outfitted for pirating, they would clearly outnumber and outgun most any other ship they came across. If the crew members on the ships they encountered were alarmed enough, they were more likely to cooperate with a pirate ship bearing the red flag. It would be foolish for them to fire on such a large force, and Gaston expected to encounter more white flags of surrender than canon fire.

"The flags are plain crimson, no skull or crossbones. If you need an out, you can explain that we fly the red flags in deference to your leader's experience sailing with the French Navy. Their flags are red."

"But none of us ever sailed with the French Navy," Chatham argued, scratching his head dubiously.

Gaston threw up his hands. "But I am French and no one will know that!"

Chatham nodded, but Appling shook his head again as if he were uncertain how he had gotten himself into this arrangement in the first place. Ultimately Chatham and Appling went along with Gaston and Pugwash. It was decided, they would each fly a scarlet flag devoid of any decoration. If in the future they wanted to add a design they would be allowed.

Just before the noon hour they set sail for Port Royale, with the *Ocean's Knave* in the lead. The *Independence* and the *Volusia* flanked either side, which left the *Greed of Hades* to bring up the rear. The four crews together boasted two hundred-fifty men and forty-six guns, a formidable force on the seas by any standards.

They hoisted anchor and Gaston stayed on deck supervising. "Let run the canvas!" he hollered to his crew. The wind whipped against his face, and the ship creaked and groaned under his feet. This was his favorite part of a voyage—the beginning. At the start of a trip he was always optimistic, giddy with excitement about the impending

adventure. His spirits soared as he anticipated whatever lay before him.

His thoughts were interrupted when he looked up to see Frederica approaching him, that scrawny cat Old Bones following along behind her. The cat's presence annoyed him, and he took a deep breath. "Greetings, how kind of you to join us, you and that wretched beast," he said, darkly.

"What do you mean? Where else would I be?" She squinted in the bright sunlight.

"I thought you might have chosen to sail aboard the *Independence*," he said with a petulance that he immediately regretted.

"Why would I do that?" she asked, a shadow crossing her face. The cat wound his way around their feet, first hers then his, then he disappeared under Frederica's skirts.

"I saw you earlier with Captain Appling, perhaps you would prefer his company," Gaston snipped. Even as the words left his mouth he wished he could bite them back. But something inside him had snapped when he'd seen Frederica and Appling playing on the beach earlier. Who did Appling think he was? And what was wrong with Frederica that she didn't see the man's less than honorable intentions toward her? At that moment he'd like to drown them both.

"Gaston, he was helping me with my parrying, showing me some new tricks with the cutlass. I should think you would want me to improve my skills, help me better prepare for the battles we shall face."

He rolled his eyes. "No, I do not approve of Captain Appling taking on the role of your instructor. That is a position to be filled by none other than myself!"

Her shoulders drooped. "So you *are* jealous. That's what all this is about." Old Bones appeared from underneath her skirt and meowed.

Crossing his arms over his chest, he simply glared at her, and then the cat.

"Miles loves Josephine. He has no feelings for me, none of them do. And I have no feelings for them. If you recall, the only reason I serviced those men was because you commanded me to," she said with a scowl. "I did it to prove my loyalty to you, and you repay me by questioning that very loyalty?"

Gaston searched for the words to explain himself, but came up short. "It-it's a complicated situation," he stammered, stomping his foot on the deck.

Her face was a mask of anger now. "Yes, it is, but it is one you have created. I have done nothing but obey you, and you have no one to blame but yourself." With that she scooped up Old Bones, turned on her heel and strode toward the captain's quarters.

Her words stung as sure as if she'd slapped him. He took a swig from a bottle of rum, welcoming the burning trail of liquid warmth as it traveled down his throat and into his belly. And he despaired as he realized, with a heavy heart, that she was right.

* * *

The next day Gaston awoke on the ship's deck with a pounding headache. He'd stayed topside and drank with Tagbor and some of the others until he'd passed out on deck. After his argument with Frederica, he'd wanted to steer clear of her.

One of the deck hands brought him some hardtack, and he chewed on it, hoping it would settle his stomach. The drink helped him forget his problems for a few hours, but it wasn't a satisfactory solution. When he awoke, his troubles had not magically disappeared. He remained on deck for the rest of the day overseeing the crew and trying not to think about his jealousy of Frederica and Appling and the rest. Keeping himself occupied was preferable to sulking all day.

They sailed north without incident until late afternoon when two ships appeared on the horizon. As they drew closer Gaston realized they'd had the good fortune to happen upon a Spanish Galleon and her escort. The escort meant the main ship would be carrying precious cargo. The Spanish were always transporting valuable goods and sometimes gold from its territories to the west through the Spanish Main on their way to Europe. Aboard the *Volusia*, Chatham still maintained his letters of mark as a privateer from the English governor, documents essentially hiring Captain Chatham and his men to rob the Spanish for England. The practice of privateering allowed for the English to profit from the pirating that was already so prevalent and rob their enemies of their precious treasury at the same time.

Gaston raised the call and the *Ocean's Knave* prepared to attack. The Galleon was large, with an estimated seventy guns and approximately two hundred men. Its escort was only slightly smaller. The size of the ships, the heavy gunnery, and the weight of the probable gold aboard meant the Spanish ships had almost no chance of outrunning Gaston's fleet.

But as they sailed closer, it was evident the Spanish had no intention of surrendering.

"If they intend to put up a fight, let's show them a fight," Gaston said. "Fire a warning shot!" He called to his gunners.

Two canons fired across the bow of the Galleon. In response they heard shouting in Spanish and the gun doors of the big ship opened slowly. Moments later they began firing.

"Full on ahead!" Gaston shouted. He wanted to get the *Ocean's*

Knave out of firing range and allow the smaller, quicker *Volusia* to come in for a shot. The *Independence* and the *Greed of Hades* had their sights set on the smaller escort ship.

But before the *Ocean's Knave* could begin maneuvering out of range, a booming explosion walloped the crew with incoming canon fire. Shards of wood flew through the air. Glass from a window shattered, some of the riggings were damaged and one of the canvases torn to bits. The smell of gunpowder assaulted his nose, and the deafening blast seemed to go on for ten minutes as the crew scurried around trying to take cover. Some men ducked low on the deck while others ran below to escape the many projectiles hurtling past.

Gaston signaled a different plan to the *Volusia* and ordered his gunners to return the volley. "Fire at the riggings!" he yelled, hoping to dismantle the Spanish ship's masts and make it impossible for her to escape.

The guns went off with a loud roar. They hit their mark, and several parts of the Spanish ship's mast came tumbling down amidst a thick, black cloud. As the smoke cleared Gaston was relieved the *Volusia* was running alongside the Galleon, its crew preparing to board.

Removing his hat, Gaston wiped his brow. A section of his ship was on fire, and the heat was brutal. He rushed to the other end and raised his spyglass.

Good show! Pugwash and his men had already boarded the escort and were taking prisoners. Occasionally a man fell or jumped, it was hard to discern, overboard. Gaston shook his head. He'd never understood why those who were beaten could not accept defeat. When *he* found himself on the other side of a boarding pike, he always resorted to verbal negotiating. He couldn't imagine falling on his own sword as he'd seen so many do. Sides could be changed so easily as many of the Spanish would realize when they signed on to sail with Gaston and his men. Why end it all over one battle? Life was nothing if not a battle, and there would always be another one around the corner.

Gaston summoned some men to go 'round and survey the damage. They'd lost some men, and the ship would need repairs, but as he watched Chatham run the Spanish Captain through with his sword, he doubted there would be much more in the way of rebellion from that crew.

"She's taking on water," a deckhand reported breathlessly.

"How bad is it?" Gaston asked.

"It's not good, but she should be able to reach Port Royale with constant bailing, if there are no delays.

"See to it. Round up twenty men and get to bailing," Gaston said.

"We lost one canvas, Capt'n, but we have another we can raise," another man said.

"Make it so," Gaston said.

The smoke was still thick in the air, his eye stung and he coughed.

It was then that he saw her. Behind the man, across the deck lying in a heap was the collapsed figure of Frederica. Bells of alarm clanged in his head and he ran toward her, unaware of the debris littering the deck.

He pulled her lifeless body into his lap. A long red gash ran diagonally across her forehead and spread deep into her hairline. Cradling her head in his arms he held her close. "Freddie," he whispered into her ear. "My darling Freddie."

When she did not respond, he spoke louder, more insistently, "Freddie!" He pressed two fingers to her neck just below her jawline. She had a pulse. Hallelujah!

But dear Lord in heaven, why wasn't she moving? What had he done? Why had he brought the woman he loved into such a dangerous situation? Hell, he knew the dangers, and he cursed himself for not setting her up in a little cottage on one of the islands where she would have been safe.

Even as he asked these questions he knew the answer. Frederica would never have had it any other way. She would never have agreed to such an arrangement, and she was an inordinately obstinate woman. For Frederica life was about adventure. She laughed in the face of danger and flouted convention every day.

Stroking her hair, he called to her once again, but wherever she was he could not reach her. His sweat rolled down his cheek and onto hers, and it wasn't until he swiped it away that he realized it wasn't sweat at all, but tears leaking from his one good eye.

Holding her in his arms, the chaos of the battle and everything else in the world melted away. He couldn't lose her, he just couldn't.

Chapter Fifteen

Upon inspection it turned out the Spanish Galleon was indeed carrying a massive amount of gold in her holds. When the smoke dissipated and the booty had been transferred from the Spanish ships onto the four pirate ships, the other three captains rowed over to *Ocean's Knave* for a conference with Gaston.

The gold had been split into four shares between them. Gaston and Chatham would take ten percent to the governor in Port Royale, and since the *Ocean's Knave* was taking on water, the *Volusia* would carry it. Pugwash and Appling would take the remainder of the gold to a secret location known only to the four captains. They would bury a portion of the treasure and distribute the rest to their men. Circumstances forced Gaston and Chatham to trust the other two men with their gold, and threats were made as to what they would do to Pugwash and Appling if they made off with the treasure.

Gaston wasn't terribly concerned about that, but Chatham was younger and unseasoned. Plus, it never hurt for Pugwash and Appling to fear retribution if they were to stray from the agreement. First of all, Gaston adhered to the code that there was honor among thieves, and second, he was too worried about Frederica to be all that concerned about the gold. It had been hours and she had still not come to. There would always be more gold, but there would never be another Frederica, and Gaston found it difficult to focus on the business at hand.

The plan was for Gaston to sail to Port Royale for his meeting with Governor Whitehall. Gaston and Chatham would settle the score with him, and then they would sail for the secret location and meet up with the others.

The men aboard the conquered Spanish ships would either choose to join the ranks of the victorious pirates who sailed under the red flag, or they would be taken as prisoners aboard the *Ocean's Knave*. Gaston would turn those prisoners over to the governor to do with as he saw fit—a peace offering of sorts. In their experience only a handful of men would choose this option, most joined the pirate crew.

The captains of the conquered ships in addition to scores of their sailors had been killed in the battle. Several men of the red ships had been killed during battle, twenty-three to be exact, with eleven injured including Frederica.

In determining what to do with the wounded, Gaston assessed their resources. Pugwash had a blacksmith aboard his ship who had been known to handle amputations. The five men who might require such an operation would be loaded onto the *Greed of Hades*.

That left six people injured. Chatham had no medical personnel on board, and Frederica had been the closest thing the *Ocean's Knave* had to a doctor. While Chatham and Pugwash talked triage for the remaining injured, Miles laid a hand on Gaston's shoulder and took him aside.

"Has she awakened?" Miles asked in a low voice.

"No," Gaston whispered. He shook off Miles' arm and began to pace in the small room where they had assembled.

"I will take her with me," Miles said.

"You most certainly will *not*!" Gaston whirled round, glaring at Miles.

"Calm yourself, mate," Miles raked a hand through his blond mane, which was wild and filled with soot after the battle. Gaston noted one of his shoulders was covered in blood. He pointed to it with a questioning look. "Not mine," Miles said, and Gaston nodded.

"The *Independence* is the only ship with a physician on board," Miles explained.

"Is he any good?" Gaston asked.

"Better than most. If anyone can help her it will be him."

Gaston studied Miles. The man's brow creased with worry, and Gaston recognized sincerity in his eyes. He had known Miles a long time, had always known him to carry a torch for his beloved Josephine, but he had known Frederica carnally. Was his concern for Gaston or for Frederica?

Deciding to bring the matter into the open, Gaston inquired, "What is your interest in Frederica?"

"What do you mean?" Miles asked. "If you mean do I have feelings for the lass, the only sentiment that passes between us is that of friendship."

"Even after you three bedded her?" Gaston made an angry swipe of his hand that included the other two captains who were wrapping up their conversation.

Miles shook his head. "Gaston that was a brave and perhaps foolish thing for you to do, offering your woman to us like that. Of course we took you up on it. And while Frederica has considerable charms, my heart belongs to someone else."

"Josephine?"

Miles nodded.

"Hell, Gaston. I'd take Frederica for myself, but the girl is besotted with you," Pugwash interjected.

Gaston eyed him doubtfully.

Chatham chimed in. "Pugwash speaks the truth Galette." He sighed, "Such a comely lass, but so in love with you."

Gaston let their words sink in before laying a hand on Miles'

forearm. "Take her then. Promise me that you and that doctor will do everything you can for her. Everything possible."

Miles covered Gaston's hand with his own and nodded.

"Everything. You must give me your word, Appling," Gaston said with a mixture of gratitude and fear.

"Nothing less," Miles assured him.

Moments later Hatch carried Frederica to the side of the ship. She looked like a tiny ragdoll slumped in his arms.

"I'm sorry, Capt'n. I should have protected her. My job," Hatch said to Gaston, the rims of the giant's eyes were swollen, but they were dry.

"That is not your job, Hatch. Your job is to defend the ship. You did your job, and there is nothing any of us could do to prevent this. She was hit in the head with flying debris, a casualty in the field of battle. There's nothing any of us could do."

Silently, with his head bowed, Hatch climbed down the ladder and handed her to Miles who settled her carefully into a dingy. Miles' crew members rowed them over toward the *Independence*. As his precious Frederica sailed out of sight, Gaston's heart broke into a million pieces.

Later that evening the *Ocean's Knave* set sail for Port Royale, and Gaston retired to his cabin. Without Frederica the space felt empty. The events of the day had left him weary and he lay down, hoping sleep would allow him to escape the hollow feeling that had taken hold of him.

Just as he closed his eyes something pounced on him. With a start he realized it was Old Bones. The white cat kneaded his paws into his chest and meowed insistently. The old boy must be missing her as well, Gaston thought as he stroked the cat's fur.

He found an odd comfort snuggling with Frederica's furry companion. The pair commiserated for a time and then Gaston fell asleep to the sound of Bones purring.

Chapter Sixteen

Though it certainly did not compare with the chateaus of France, the governor's home in Port Royale was by far the finest dwelling in the entire city. It rose three stories high and was fortified with red brick. It did not have a porch, a feature Gaston had grown to appreciate when he'd lived in the Carolinas, but Governor Whitehurst was the wealthiest man in the Caribbean, and if he didn't mind the lack of a porch Gaston decided that was his prerogative.

A dark-skinned man opened the door, showed Gaston and Chatham into a well-appointed parlor, and went to fetch the governor. Gaston looked around at the governor's huge collection of books. He'd been an avid reader in his earlier years, but realized now it had been ages since he'd picked up a book. *How had that happened?* His chest tightened as he realized that he hadn't read a book since meeting Frederica. Every waking moment he wasn't toiling on the ship or managing the crew, he had been content, no thrilled, to bask in her companionship.

It rattled him that it was her companionship, and not merely the allures of her nubile young body that kept him enthralled. Frederica had become his partner in every sense of the word. She was his lover, his mistress, and his most trusted friend. When he pictured her the way he had last seen her, her lifeless body lying next to Miles, his heart skipped a beat. He issued a silent vow. *If she ever comes back to me, I must make her mine permanently.*

A door creaked and his thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Governor Whitehurst. The governor cut a distinguished figure in his formal garb, complete with gold buttons and powdered wig. Gaston and Chatham jumped to their feet. Chatham bowed while Gaston proffered a hand.

Whitehurst gave Chatham a dismissive glance and took Gaston's hand, giving him the limp fish version of a handshake. Inwardly, Gaston shuddered. It amazed him that the man could have risen to such heights of power with the grip of a young girl.

"Captain Galette, Captain Chatham, it is good of you to come. Let us take a seat." He motioned for them to sit and they obliged.

"It is an honor to serve you, sir." Chatham fawned touching his index finger to the brim of his hat.

"Yes, I hear you have a haul for me," the governor said.

"We do, sir. Quite a haul." Chatham went on to share the details of their exploits against the Spanish Galleon.

The governor did not seem impressed. "Any prisoners?" he asked nonchalantly.

Gaston answered, "Five prisoners, sir. They have been taken to the jail."

"Ah, good. I need people we can make an example of, and those outlaw Spaniards will do. The ruffians are getting out of hand in Port Royale, and the people need constant reminders of the power of the British government."

Gaston made a great show of agreeing wholeheartedly though he couldn't care a whit about the governor's problems with the citizens of Port Royale or how he managed them.

"Chatham, I am grateful for your service. I'd like you to go down and meet with the bursar, make certain we have all the gold accounted for."

Governor Whitehurst rang a tinkly, silver bell, and a moment later his daughter appeared. Her flaming red hair contrasted against her pale skin and her features were pleasant. She wore fashionable clothes that suited her plump figure. The girl took one look at Chatham and a delighted smile spread across her face.

"Captain Chatham, this is my daughter, Henrietta Whitehurst. Henrietta, this is Captain Edward Chatham, Captain of the *Volusia*."

Henrietta looked at Chatham in that enthusiastic way pirates looked at a treasure chest brimming with gold, and Gaston was surprised when a sheepish Chatham grinned back at her. This was a side of Chatham Gaston had not seen before.

"Henrietta, will you please see Captain Chatham to the bursar's office? Then he and Captain Galette here will be joining us for dinner."

Henrietta eagerly agreed. Chatham offered her his arm, and she tucked her arm in his and they left, closing the door behind them.

Once they were gone, Governor Whitehurst leaned over and looked Gaston square in the eyes. "Captain Galette, we have a bit of a problem and I believe you might be the man to help us solve it."

"A problem, sir?" Gaston asked, hoping the man wasn't going to tell him more about the local rabble rousers or regional politics. What happened on dry land did not hold much interest for him. He preferred the drama in his life to play out in the open seas.

Whitehurst nodded. "Nasty chap by the name of Humphrey. The worst sort of pirate. Sails under the Jolie Rouge."

Heat rose in Gaston's cheeks, and he hoped the governor wouldn't notice. He hadn't sailed under the Jolie Rouge per se, but if the governor thought ill of the practice, then he and his men could find themselves in trouble.

"Yes," Gaston offered, noncommittally.

"You know the man I take it?"

Gaston nodded vigorously. "A bad seed by all accounts."

“Humphrey has been raiding the ships of my privateers, slaughtering entire ships full of passengers, merchant ships... The man is a menace, and I will not have him wreaking havoc in my territory. Do you understand me?”

Gaston did, though he found it amusing the governor thought he could control what went on hundreds of miles out to sea from his perch here on land. The privateers that worked for Whitehurst raided ships, gave him a percentage, and in return the governor left them alone. But Gaston knew that if he or the other men stepped out of line, Whitehurst would come after them. He may have been an old man, but he commanded the long arm of the British Navy, and had the ear of some of the most cut-throat pirates in the region. If one found himself on the wrong side of Governor Whitehurst he would likely find his neck in a noose or worse.

Eager to move things along and get back to Frederica, Gaston said, “I understand precisely. How may I be of assistance in this manner?”

The governor clasped his hands in his lap and said with a smile that was more genteel than bloodthirsty, “I’d like you to bring him to me.”

Gaston leaned forward as if he hadn’t heard correctly. “Bring him to you?” he repeated.

“Yes.”

“But your grace, you do realize what you are asking is quite an onerous task. If we attack him he’s liable to be killed. Humphrey won’t go down without a fight.” He paused for a moment, considering. “I could bring you his head,” he countered.

Whitehurst shook his white curls vehemently. “No! The head won’t do. I want you to capture him and bring him back here to stand trial. He must be made an example of—a big trial, a public hanging, all of it. That will make for a much better deterrent than his head on a spike to display. We have those by the dozen.”

Gaston sighed heavily. Carrying out the governor’s request would not be easy, but he had to concede the man’s point. “Bring him in alive?”

“Yes. I know it is a daunting task, but one I believe you and your men are up to. Is it true that you are sailing with Captains Appling, Pugwash, and Chatham these days?”

“Word travels fast.” How could the man possibly know that? Whitehurst’s spies must be further reaching than he’d thought.

“Appling’s a fine captain, Chatham’s young, and Pugwash is a trifle uncivilized for my taste, though I admit his record does speak for itself,” he said, begrudgingly.

“They are a fine lot, as are their men,” Gaston agreed.

The governor pursed his lips and nodded in agreement. "Then you should have no trouble carrying out this task," he said smugly.

No trouble, Gaston grumbled to himself. "What sort of bounty have you placed upon his head, and have you tasked anyone else with the job?"

"No, only you. I believe you to be the best man for the job, and I'd like you to carry it out quickly and without fanfare. Leave justice to me once he arrives on my shores."

"And the bounty?" Gaston asked again.

"One thousand pieces of eight, a quarter of that if you only bring in his head. I want him alive, Galette. Understand?"

Gaston nodded. "I do. Alive."

Whitehurst shifted in his chair. "I realize you have a history with the man, and you'd like to kill him, but you must not allow yourself the folly of poor forethought. If you lose your head and murder him for vengeance, the rest of your crew will suffer a great financial loss—at your expense. You are popular with your men, but do not overestimate the value of that popularity over gold."

The old man was right of course. It *would* be difficult not to kill Humphrey when given the chance. Humphrey had tried to kill him and he'd taken advantage of Frederica in ways that turned his stomach. But if the governor intended to execute him, and Gaston would receive a financial reward for ridding the world of the bastard, all the better.

"I myself value gold above all else," Gaston said with a slick smile, though even as the words left his mouth he knew they were false. His feelings for Frederica seemed to have eclipsed even his love of money. How and when did this occur? He was not certain, but he'd give every coin, every bauble he had if he could ensure her survival.

The not-knowing threatened to drive him mad. Was she even alive at this moment? Could she have died? There was a part of him that was sure he would feel it if she died. If she left this earth he would feel it in his bones. But that went against reason and he chided himself for entertaining such superstitious, magical thoughts.

"Galette! Are you listening?" Whitehurst snapped.

"Huh? Oh yes, I apologize. I seem to be coming down with a headache," he lied.

"A headache, eh? It wouldn't be that lovely brunette I hear you've brought aboard the *Ocean's Knave*, would it? Where is she anyway? I thought you'd be bringing her with you," Whitehurst raised a questioning brow.

Gaston wondered why everyone seemed so blooming interested in Frederica, and his skin began to itch. "She's suffered an injury," he said, hoping that would be the end of it.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Whitehurst said. “My daughter was looking forward to meeting her. A female pirate is an oddity, but they say your girl is as lovely as an English rose.”

“They are correct, governor.”

“Very well then, you and Chatham will dine with Henrietta and me this evening.”

“I appreciate your hospitality, governor, but I fear I must be on my way.” Gaston was eager to wrap up this business as rapidly as possible and get back to his ship.

“Nonsense, you may depart tomorrow. We need to discuss this Humphrey character further over dinner. I may be able to get you some leads on him.”

“If it pleases your grace,” Gaston said with a brittle half-smile, and he tapped the floor impatiently with his foot.

Chapter Seventeen

Frederica awoke to a brain crushing scream. It took significant effort to open her eyes, but she forced her lids apart and was immediately sorry for it. The light coming in through the cracks between the planks felt like a spear to the brain, and she shut them again.

Not wanting to aggravate her pounding head she lay quietly still and began to gather her bearings. Where was she? It felt as though she were lying in a hammock. She identified the smells around her as blood and turpentine. Could she be in an infirmary?

Then the memory of the battle came rushing back to her. The last thing she remembered was something hitting her in the head. This sent a wave of panic through her. The last time she'd been hit in the head and fainted she had awoken a prisoner of the evil Captain Humphrey.

She struggled to get out of the hammock. She must find out, she must know where she was. One of her feet got hung up in the ropes, and she almost fell out of the rudimentary bed, but she pulled it out just before she tipped herself over.

Staggering on rubbery legs she squinted against the stray rays of sunlight that infiltrated the dark, dank space. Sick, bandaged men littered the room, many of them unconscious, and a few cried out in pain. The *Ocean's Knave* had a similar sick bay, but she could tell she was not aboard her own ship, and that realization sent a jolt of terror coursing down her spine.

She stumbled past most of the men toward a door at the end of the room and practically fell into the arms of a man carrying a lantern and an armload of rags and cloth bandages. He dropped them to steady Frederica. "Ho, miss!" he said.

Too frightened to be concerned with her manners, Frederica wailed, "Where am I? Who are you?"

The man wrapped an arm around her and helped her to a bench in the corner. "Have a seat," he said.

Having used up her strength walking just a few steps she sank down onto the hard, wooden bench.

"You are aboard the *Independence*. I am the physician who has been caring for you. The name is Jones." He reached out and shook her hand. "Capt'n Appling has made you our honored guest, and I'm under strict order to see that you receive the best possible care."

"Captain Appling?" she asked, trying to shake the fuzz from her brain.

"Yes. He will be most pleased that you are awake. I will inform

him as soon as I examine you. He will be quite pleased with the news," Jones said with a kind smile.

She bobbed her head and a sharp pain stabbed over her right eye. "Ouch." Lifting her hand to the location of the throbbing, she discovered a knot the size of a goose egg. A large bandage covered her head where her forehead met her hairline.

"You suffered quite a blow. To be honest I wasn't certain you would wake up," Jones said as he held the lantern up to inspect her eyes. He checked her pulse then walked her back to her original hammock. "You have suffered a serious blow to the head. My best medical advice is to rest. I'll bring you some water, and you should eat. Slowly at first, then work up to a larger meal. You will need nourishment to gain your strength."

"Alright, but where are we going? Where is this ship going? Where is my crew?" she asked, becoming agitated.

He patted her hand and said, "I will fetch Captain Applling for you, miss. He can answer all your questions."

Frederica lay in her hammock trying to process the information. She was aboard the *Independence*... Why? And where was Gaston? Dread gripped her as she contemplated the possibilities. A chill ran through her and she wrapped her arms around herself tightly and rocked back and forth in the aerial bunk.

It was only a matter of minutes before Miles burst through the door.

"Frederica! Jones told me you were awake, but I dared not believe it."

He lifted her into his arms for a big hug. She winced, and he set her back down.

"Sorry, didn't mean to disturb you," he said suddenly looking worried, as if he might have broken her.

She laughed weakly. "It's alright. My head just hurts."

"I'll wager it does. You suffered quite a blow. We weren't sure you'd wake up."

"That's what Jones said." She reached for his hand. "Miles, where are we going? Where is Gaston? Is he...?"

"Ah! Gaston's fine. He went ahead to Port Royale. Left you with me because mine was the only ship with a physician. He wanted you to have the best chance at recovery."

"I see," she said, relief filling her. "Thank you for tending to me. He went to meet with the governor?"

Miles nodded. "Then we're to meet him afterward. Shouldn't be more than a few days."

"What about everyone else? Who did we lose?" she looked around the sickroom at the men, most of them she did not know.

Miles filled her in on the casualties and losses as well as the plans for distributing the gold. He began telling her about where they would meet Gaston, but she had trouble focusing on his words. Feeling drowsier and drowsier, she finally rested her head against his shoulder and drifted off to sleep.

Chapter Eighteen

The *Ocean's Knave* eased into the harbor, and Gaston could see the *Independence* in the distance anchored a thousand yards from shore. His heart was in his throat when he asked the ship's master to bring them up to board at the bow.

Frederica was on that ship, though he had no idea in what condition he would find her. His nerves rankled him as if they were on the outside of his skin, and his stomach felt like it had fallen through a trap door. Petrified and at a rare loss for words, he motioned for Hatch to direct the men to throw over the ropes and tie the two vessels together.

"Ahoy!" Hatch hollered at the crew of the *Independence*. A few men answered. "The woman patient you have on board. What is her condition?" Hatch called.

The men looked confused, and Hatch asked, "Is she alive?"

One of the men began to nod his head.

Relief flushed through Gaston and he almost dropped to his knees to praise heaven for answering his prayers. But before he could fully digest the news, he saw her.

Moving gingerly and with Appling's help, his beloved Frederica walked toward the ship's railing.

His heart was so full that he thought he would burst. "Frederica!" Gaston called, his voice conveying every ounce of passion inside him.

She tilted her head toward his voice and their eyes met. A look of pure rapture crossed her face, and she broke out into the prettiest smile he had ever witnessed.

She waved wildly. "Gaston!"

Gaston climbed into a rowboat, which the men let down into the water, and then Hatch navigated them to the other ship where Miles was gently helping Frederica down the ladder.

Hatch stood and told Frederica, "Jump, missy. Hatch will catch you."

The drop was only a few feet, but she bit her lip nervously. After a minute she let go and fell into the giant's arms. He deposited her into the boat next to Gaston who held her tightly and crooned into her hair, "Frederica. My darling Frederica. You must never frighten me like that again."

She laughed softly. "I won't. I'm sorry you were worried." She laced her fingers around his neck and rested her head on his shoulder. Suddenly all was right in his world, and Gaston couldn't imagine anything more important than keeping her safe. Except possibly making her his on a permanent basis.

He lifted her chin so he could gaze into her amazing blue eyes. He had been all over the world and had never met anyone else with such arresting eyes. They dazzled him in their transparency, making him feel as though he could see straight into her soul. He wanted to stare into those eyes every day for the rest of his life.

“Frederica, I have something to ask of you.”

She studied him curiously. “Yes, what is it?”

Though it was awkward to maneuver in the small boat he lifted her from his lap and set her on the seat. He then knelt on one knee and took her hands in his.

“Gaston what are you doing?”

“Something I should have done a long time ago,” he muttered then continued, “Frederica Beauchamp, my dearest girl, I have grown accustomed to your delightful presence and in light of your recent injury it has come to my attention that I should not like to be deprived of it. Without you the moon simply doesn’t shine quite as bright. You are the most incredible woman I’ve ever known and the perfect partner for me—in piracy as well as in life.”

Frederica’s eyes widened. “Gaston, what are you saying?”

He gave her his most charming smile and said, “I’m asking you to become my wife.”

“Your wife?” To his surprise she looked outraged.

He leaned back as if she had struck him. “Yes, Frederica. My wife,” he said, his tone mildly defensive.

“But Gaston you know I despise a life of domesticity!” she grumbled, sticking her bottom lip out.

He rolled his eyes. “My dear, nothing would change. We would still sail the open seas, pillage, plunder, all the usual pirate activities... our life will still be an adventure.”

She eyed him suspiciously. “You promise?”

“Absolutely.”

“You don’t intend to put me in a little cottage and make me pregnant while you go off raiding and marauding?”

“No!”

“You don’t plan to drop me in some tiny village and make me do your washing?”

“No!”

“Gaston, I don’t understand. Why get married then? Things are lovely between us as they are.”

“My darling, I don’t want to change who you are, or who we are. I love you, and I love us.”

She looked confused. “So why do you want to do this?”

“Because, my love, I want you to be mine officially. I want you to belong to me in every way possible. I want you to be mine and mine

alone.”

“Ah, that’s rather sweet,” her face softened. “‘Til death do us part. That does sound like us.”

He pulled a ring from his pocket and showed it to her. “So will you please say yes?”

She held the gold ring with the large, sparking aquamarine stone in her hand and considered it for a moment. Finally she gave him her answer. “Yes!” she answered in a firm voice.

Their lips touched and Gaston’s heart sang once again. The softness of her lips quenched him like a cask of water to a man lost at sea. He drank her in and promised himself he would make her happy.

A cheer erupted from the ships on either side of them. They hadn’t noticed that the crew of both ships had congregated and were listening to their conversation until they boisterously voiced their approval of the outcome.

“So it’s a wedding we’ll be having?” Miles called down from the side rail of the *Independence*.

“Aye!” Gaston shouted. “And I’ll be needing someone to stand up with me. Do you think you’re man enough for the post?”

Miles laughed and shook his head. “I wouldn’t forgive you if you asked anyone else.”

Chapter Nineteen

Once she had settled into Gaston's embrace Frederica noticed Hatch was steering them toward the beach rather than escorting her back to the *Ocean's Knave*.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"If your health is sound and you're feeling up for it, I thought we would be married."

"Today?" His proposal had caught her off guard, and she was having trouble keeping up with him.

"Yes, everything has been arranged. How is your head?" He touched her bandaged forehead gingerly and murmured, "My poor girl."

The bleeding had stopped for the most part, and the splitting pain in her head had receded to a dull annoyance. The purpose of the bandage across her head was just to keep the wound clean.

"I believe I can manage," Frederica smiled, and her stomach turned over as she said the words. Marrying Gaston—she hadn't thought about that since they'd first fallen in love. Once she'd adopted the rapsallion ways of the buccaneers it had not occurred to her that she and Gaston would do something as typical and plebian as to marry.

But it felt right, and it flattered her that he wanted to make her his bride. She loved him completely, and she wanted only him. Clearly the dalliance with the other captains had shaken him, and she had no need to repeat the experience. While she had given her body to them, she'd done it at his behest, and even though the experience had been an exotic pleasure ride, Gaston was more than enough for her. His appetite for adventure, both in and outside the bedchamber matched hers perfectly.

"Whatever shall I wear?" she asked, frowning at her current blouse and skirt which still bore the bloodstains of her injury.

Gaston arched a brow the way he always did when he was keeping a secret from her. "I've already seen to that, my dear."

"You have?"

He nodded. "I told you. Everything has been arranged."

"By whom?"

"Myself. Well, I did have some assistance from the governor and his daughter."

"The governor?" She felt her eyes widen. Even though she wouldn't admit it aloud, Frederica had been disappointed that she had missed the opportunity to meet the governor.

"Yes. He has given us a new commission, but when I impressed

upon him the importance of our union, he and his daughter, Henrietta, were more than eager to help.”

Frederica just stared at him.

As if it were an afterthought, Gaston said, “They’re here, if you’d like to thank them.”

“They are here? As in on this island...”

“Yes, my love. I don’t think the vicar would have agreed to come unless the governor accompanied him. For some reason the old bloke didn’t trust me. The governor tried to beg off, but Henrietta insisted he needs more excitement in his life. And what’s more exciting than a wedding between two pirates?” He laughed, clearly quite proud of himself.

“Indeed.” She sat back to absorb his words.

After a few moments she asked, “What if I had said no? Or what if I had been dead?” She couldn’t imagine him planning a wedding and then finding out she had died. Nothing could be worse.

Pulling her close, he stroked her hair. “My darling if you had perished I don’t know what I would have done. I tried my best not to entertain the idea. Instead I tried to remain optimistic in my thoughts.”

Toying with her locks, he continued, “If you had said no, I’d have spent the rest of my days attempting to change your mind.”

She burrowed into the crook of his arm. “You would?”

“Absolutely,” he said, kissing her on the nose.

In a few minutes, the boat came onshore and Gaston ushered her toward a tent that had been set up on the beach. “This is where you may ready yourself. I’ll have someone bring you some fresh water for bathing, and I will introduce you to Henrietta once I find her. She’ll bring the dress and help you prepare.”

“I can’t believe you’ve gone to such trouble for me.” She hugged him tightly and kissed his supple lips.

“My darling Freddie, I’d do anything in the world for you,” he said with a wink then left her alone in the tent.

There was a small cot set up inside and she lay down upon it. The trip to shore had not been extensive, but it had tired her out nonetheless. She wondered if she had the stamina for a wedding, but pushed the negative thoughts aside. If Gaston had gone to this much trouble, and the governor was to attend, she would rise to the occasion.

She must have drifted off to sleep because she was awakened by a woman’s high pitched voice. “You must be Frederica!”

Groggily, Frederica rose up onto an elbow. “Yes, I am Frederica. You must be Henrietta.” She squinted at the imposing woman before her, all curly red hair and flashing white teeth.

“Yes, that’s me. Oh, I am so thrilled to make your acquaintance, Miss Frederica! I’ve never met a lady pirate before,” Henrietta prattled on, the woman was a bundle of energy.

Frederica shrugged. “You can call me Freddie if you like.”

Henrietta’s hands flew to her cheeks. “Freddie! Oh my heavens. This is going to be a beautiful wedding.” She began to pace in a circle which made Frederica dizzy. “So much to do. First let’s get you a bath, clean all that blood off you.” She blanched at the bloody state of Frederica’s clothing. “I’ll have my girl wash your hair then you can lie in the sun to dry.”

Tenderly, Frederica got up from her bed and placed herself squarely in the enthusiastic hands of Henrietta Whitehurst.

* * *

After her bath Frederica felt like a new person. Henrietta’s servant had washed the caked-on blood from her hair and, at Gaston’s request, she had even brought ivory-colored ribbon to twine through her hair, a special touch that made Frederica realize how much Gaston had thought of her.

The dress Henrietta brought her had taken Frederica’s breath away. The silk bodice fitted snugly and displayed her ample bosom to its best advantage, and the sleeves hugged her arms until, below the elbow they flared out—a design that Henrietta assured her was all the fashion these days.

Frederica wouldn’t even hazard a guess at the number of yards of fabric it took to make the skirt. It was enormous with an endless number of silk rosebud medallions every six inches or so. The effect was stunning, like nothing she’d ever seen before.

Around dusk, a sailor popped his head in the tent and told Henrietta it was time to go. She handed Frederica a bouquet made from white plumeria and yellow orchids. Smiling to herself Frederica remembered the first time she had seen plumeria. It had been on the island where she and Gaston had been marooned, where he’d introduced her to the ways of love and submission. Where she’d fallen in love with him and begged him to take her with him.

Outside, Hatch and some of the men stood around a contraption made from palm fronds and husks. It looked to be a makeshift chair.

Frederica gave Hatch a funny look.

“A seat for you. We will carry you.”

“What? Why?” Frederica asked.

“Missy the wedding is that way,” he pointed into the jungle. “You are too weak to walk.”

She wanted to argue with him, but Hatch knew more about the situation than she did and he was right. She was still weak.

Fortunately, her head had stopped throbbing for the moment.

“Have a seat,” Hatch said and she plopped down into the tropical litter. Hatch and three other men hoisted her into the air with the bamboo handles, and after a few adjustments they headed into the trees.

Riding high above everyone, with the cool ocean breeze blowing in her hair, Frederica felt like a princess. The scent of plumeria from her bouquet drifted deliciously underneath her nostrils and filled her head with romantic memories of time spent with her soon-to-be husband.

Lanterns lit the way as they followed a path into the jungle. Henrietta and several of the men followed behind. Frederica heard a familiar voice flirting with Henrietta and she giggled as her new friend flirted back.

The farther they traveled into the jungle, the more convinced Frederica became that the place was somehow familiar. Most island vegetation did look similar, but something else about this trek reminded her of something, though she wasn't sure what.

Until they arrived at the destination. Even before she saw it, it dawned on her when she heard the rush of the water.

The waterfall—that was it!

Their waterfall.

Gaston had brought her to the same island where they had been shipwrecked and the exact location where he had taken her for the first time. Tears sprang to her eyes as the enormity of the moment rested on her.

Gaston, more dashing than ever in a crisp white shirt, long, blue coat with shiny, gold buttons and polished boots, strode toward her. The sapphire plume of his dapper new hat dragged the sand as he removed it and bowed low to her.

Standing up, he reached for her hand and called her that lovely French moniker he'd used to address her the first time they'd met, “Mademoiselle.”

“Gaston!” She cried, falling into his arms. “This is it. The place... our waterfall.”

“I know, my love,” he said, and shushed her with a kiss.

When he pulled away, he took her hand and led her toward the pool at the base of the waterfall. By now the sun had gone down and the nighttime jungle sounds mixed with the gushing water that tumbled down the great waterfall. Over fifty guests surrounded them, many of them crew members from the *Ocean's Knave*, but there were a few men from the other ships in their alliance. She saw Pugwash standing next to the cook and the doctor, Jones. All the faces were familiar, including Mrs. Campbell, the woman who ran the Boar's

Breath Inn on the other side of the island. Captain Chatham, standing next to Henrietta, met her eye then blushed and looked at the ground.

Most of the guests held a candle, though some carried lanterns. They lit up the jungle beautifully, showcasing the magnificence of nature which served as a backdrop for her and Gaston to profess their love for one another.

They stood before the vicar and he joined their hands together. There, under a canopy of palms, looking into Gaston's eyes, Frederica promised to love, honor, and obey him for all the days of her life. When it was his turn, he squeezed her hands in his as he recited the vows to protect and cherish his wife until the end of time. In that moment she knew that if she trusted Gaston, he would take care of her. He knew her better than anyone ever had, and he loved her despite her faults. She felt the same way about him. Gaston could be arrogant and infuriating, but she adored every crazy, dreaded lock on his head, and the way that he loved her made her forget other men even existed.

Gaston slipped a ring on her finger with a sapphire the size of a walnut. Her jaw dropped at the size of the stone, but Gaston just winked and held her hand tightly. When the vicar gave Gaston permission to kiss his bride, he pulled her to him and crushed her lips with his in a display of passion that made it clear he meant to possess her in every way possible. His tongue sought hers which started a quiver of desire in her belly that sank lower and lower until she could feel the wetness between her thighs. Gaston rested his hand on the small of her back before moving it south onto her derriere. That got the crowd's attention, and they were regaled with a thunderous applause from their guests.

When they came up for air, they were greeted by a throng of well-wishers all wanting to shake Gaston's hand. One man suggested they should all get to kiss the bride, to which Gaston responded by pretending to draw his cutlass. He did, however, allow Miles to embrace her, an act that told Frederica that marriage was already beginning to boost her husband's confidence.

Pugwash came by and gave them both enormous hugs. His eyes were damp and he blew his nose into a kerchief before lighting up his pipe.

"Pug, are you crying?" Gaston asked with a chuckle.

"Bite yer tongue," Pugwash groused, though his red-rimmed eyes and sniffles told a different story. *The old pirate truly has a sensitive side*, Frederica thought. Pugwash blew a few rings of smoke and wished them all the best.

A well-dressed, older gentlemen approached them. Henrietta walked beside him, her hand tucked in his arm, leading Frederica to

surmise he must be the governor.

“Governor Whitehurst, may I present my bride, Frederica?” Gaston said.

“Congratulations, Mrs. Galette. I hope you will accept the dress as our gift. Henrietta could not determine what might be a suitable gift for a pirate bride. So when your husband indicated the need for a dress I asked Henny to arrange for one.”

Frederica felt her jaw drop then quickly recovered. “Yes, thank you ever so much. It is the loveliest dress I’ve ever seen!” She gave Henrietta a quick look of reproach for not telling her the dress had been a gift from herself and the governor, but the girl was too busy batting her eyelashes at one of the sailors to notice. Frederica bit back a smile when she saw it was Edward Chatham. It must have been Edward she’d heard flirting with Henny earlier.

“I’m pleased you liked it. Gold is always a welcome gift to be sure, but you and your husband will come into plenty of that when he completes my next commission,” the governor said.

“Oh?” she asked.

Gaston muttered into her ear, “I’ll catch you up later.”

Frederica nodded.

Governor Whitehurst turned his attention to his daughter, who was now flirting shamelessly with Chatham. The governor tugged on her arm and pulled her away from Chatham. “Congratulations! May your marriage be a long and happy one,” he said to Frederica and Gaston. They watched him drag Henrietta away and laughed.

When they had accepted the heartfelt congratulations from the last of their guests, they followed the crowd back to the beach. Frederica felt so buoyed by the ceremony that she told Gaston she didn’t need to be carried.

“Are you certain? Because I will fetch Hatch and the others to bring you back,” he said, a worried look on his face.

“No, Gaston. I will be fine. I need the exercise. This night air is making me feel better already.”

“Well, if you begin to feel too fatigued tell me and I will carry you.”

She smiled at him. “Thank you.”

It was only the two of them left. The sounds of the night had come alive in the dark and they walked toward the water’s edge.

“What a terribly romantic man you are, bringing me back to the place where it all began for us,” she teased, running a hand across the blue fabric of his jacket.

“My dear, I have recently come to realize that this is where my life essentially began.”

She shook her head as if he were telling a tall tale.

“It’s true,” he insisted. “Before you, I was a walking dead man. I cared for nothing but myself, and I was even careless in that regard. When you came into my life I was determined not to let you in.” He wrapped an arm around her waist. “But you wouldn’t accept that. You wormed your way into my heart you little wench, and now I realize that I cannot live without you.”

“Let’s hope you never have to,” she said and kissed him, the sounds of the waterfall rippling behind them.

Chapter Twenty

The wedding party moved to the beach where bottles of rum, whiskey, and wine flowed freely. Some of the men danced around a large bonfire. A member of *Volusia's* crew played the trumpet and a few of the men from the *Greed of Hades* played their fiddles.

Near the fire, Henrietta danced with Edward Chatham. Governor Whitehurst looked on, arms crossed and a scowl on his face. The rest of the party seemed to be in good spirits, the sound of laughter mingling with the crackle from the fire in the night air.

Frederica and Gaston shared a cup of wine, and he asked her to dance. She'd been enjoying the music, tapping her feet in the sand in time, but her energy was starting to wane. Additionally, she feared dancing would make her dizzy. She clutched his hand to her breast. "I'd like to retire if possible, master."

"Your wish is my command," he said.

Gaston led her to one of the small, beached rowboats and pushed it back into the water. He held the boat steady and Frederica tiptoed through the sea foam. Lifting her heavy skirts, she climbed into the boat. The dress took up so much space that Gaston had to tuck it into the sides, and she clutched the fabric to her body, trying to make room for him in the small boat.

When he got in and began rowing, she laughed. "This dress is the size of a sea monster."

"You've never looked more beautiful," he said.

"Even with this bandage?" she asked, uncertain.

"What bandage?" he asked, pretending not to notice.

"This one!" she laughed and pointed at the white strip around her head.

"I don't see a bandage," he teased.

She reached into the water and splashed water up at him, giggling.

"Truly, I have never seen a more beautiful bride, my love. And tonight we have the entire ship to ourselves."

"You're joking."

"No, I am not, and even though you're still ailing, I intend to make you scream."

"Loudly?" she asked the excitement in her voice building.

"Oh, yes."

"You never let me scream loudly."

He winked at her. "Consider it a wedding gift."

Soon they reached the *Ocean's Knave*, boarded it, and made their way to their cabin.

Once he'd closed the door, Gaston turned Frederica to face him and kissed her. He started at the hollow of her throat and moved slowly, up her neck in a sensuous ascent to her ear. Taking her tender earlobe between his teeth he bit down with just enough force to bring the nerves to life.

Frederica luxuriated in his touch and craned her neck for more.

Gaston chuckled, "You're a greedy little bride, aren't you?"

"Yes, master."

"Then I'd better get you out of this gown." He stepped behind her and began to unbutton the numerous buttons of her gown. Then, as the dress fell to the ground, he caressed her shoulders, pushed her hair aside, and kissed the nape of her neck.

After unlacing her corset, he removed the rest of her undergarments and gazed upon her. Gaston had seen her naked hundreds of times, but now that they were man and wife it felt different. Butterflies fluttered in her stomach, and feeling shy, she covered her breasts with her hands.

"We'll have none of that," Gaston growled and took her wrists in his hands. "There will be no false modesty with your husband, madam."

Madam. This was the first time he'd ever called her that. Before she had always been a mademoiselle. But now...

"Oh, you don't like that?"

She furrowed her brow. "It's nothing."

He took her in his arms and whispered in her ear. "Let me show you why it is a good thing to be my wife."

He laid her on the bed and took out the ropes he so often used to bind her. Slowly and purposefully he tied her wrists together then attached them to the hooks on the cabin wall. She loved the feel as he draped the rope over her body, relished the way it scratched her skin ever so slightly, reveled in the weight of it as it slid over her flesh.

Once he had bound her arms above her head, she tugged at the bindings and found she could move them less than an inch in any direction. She'd learned to crave the feeling of helplessness being restrained brought her and as it washed over her, she moaned with pleasure.

Gaston had undressed save his breeches and he looked down at her the way a cat might eye a wounded bird. Hunger shone in his good eye, and Frederica was struck again by the sexiness of his eye patch. It made him appear dangerous and unpredictable, two of the traits that attracted her to him. His dreadlocks had been tied back for the ceremony, but now he set them free and they cascaded down over his shoulders. The taut muscles of his chest and abdomen gleamed in the lamplight, and she felt as though she would burst if he did not

take her soon.

Hovering over her, he took her left breast in his mouth and suckled until her nipple grew pebbled and hard. He pinched the other one tight between his fingers, eliciting a tiny scream.

"Ah! The screaming. I assure you there will be plenty more of that, my pet."

After he'd attended her breasts and made her pussy slick with wanting, he kissed and caressed his way down her abdomen and down her thighs. Maddeningly, he skipped right past her aching cunt without even acknowledging her need.

Nibbling on the flesh of her inner thighs, then her calf, he finally lifted her foot to his lips. With a devilish grin, he began to suckle each of her dainty toes. His wet mouth tickled yet aroused her, the sensation felt remarkably delicious. Watching him work her toes with his mouth brought to mind how fond she'd become of sucking his cock. She wanted to reach for it right now, to stroke it. She wanted the feel of him in her hand, but her hands were tied.

Instead, she closed her eyes and lost herself in the wet heat of his mouth. Suddenly, she felt a rope wrapping around her ankle. Her eyes flew open to watch Gaston loop the rope round and around her ankle. He didn't usually bind her legs and she wanted to ask his intentions, but watching him work was spellbinding, and truly it was of no consequence. She trusted him to do what was best for her. Trusted him to take care of her in every conceivable manner.

Next, he stretched her leg up over her head, determining how much give he had, how far her leg would comfortably stretch. Frederica had become more flexible since she and Gaston had been together, and she could now spread her legs quite far apart. Gaston must have counted on this because he tied her ankles so that her legs were wide apart, leaving her poor pussy vulnerable.

Craning her neck to look at the wall, she saw that he had added another set of hooks on which to secure ropes, the scoundrel. But secretly, it pleased her to know that he'd planned something different, something special, for their first tryst as man and wife.

After he'd secured the first leg, he started working on the next one and tied it the same way he'd done the other one. Now she was completely open to anything he wanted to do to her.

"Whose cunt is this, my love?" he asked as his palm came down across her eager lips, the slapping sound resonating through the cabin.

"Oooh! Yours."

"I'm not sure I heard that properly," he said and cupped a hand behind his ear for dramatic effect before administering another smack to her pussy, this time scoring a direct blow to her swollen clitoris.

"Yours, master. My cunt belongs to you," she panted.

One corner of his mouth curved up into a lazy grin. "That's what I like to hear."

He swatted her again, this time harder. "Do you know why I'm spanking your lovely pussy?"

The blow took her inside herself, and she could only shake her head no.

Thwack! "Because I want my new wife to know who is in charge."

"You are, Gaston. You are my master and you always will be."

She felt the head of his cock rub against the engorged lips of her pussy. Her clit thrummed, begging to be touched, stroked. The blend of pleasure and pain had overpowered her so completely that she felt somewhat disoriented.

There was nothing quite so exquisite as when Gaston turned her into an instrument of his pleasure. He always saw to it that she received her own release, and when he used her to satisfy whatever depraved craving he had on his mind, it ignited a scorching lust inside her.

He dipped his cock in the shallow pool of her wetness then he pulled it out and drew tiny circles with it across the apex of her sex. Her hips bucked and rounded to meet him, she wanted more pressure against her aching bud, but he stopped her.

"Darling, you've suffered a head injury. It is imperative that you lie completely still and do not move."

She glared at him as if he had recently escaped an insane asylum.

"I will see to your pleasure, but you must remain still. No movement whatsoever; that is why I've bound you in this way."

A gurgle of frustration escaped her throat as he continued to swirl his cock against her clit. Then his flesh smacked against hers.

Whap! Whap! Whap! He slapped her with his cock, each blow tenderizing her most sensitive skin. She wasn't sure if it was her imagination, but it felt as if his cock grew harder with each swat.

He covered her mouth with his, claiming her with his tongue. Then he whispered, "Enough waiting, you've been very patient my greedy girl." With that he buried himself inside her, the heat of his rod penetrating her to her core, stretching her in the most glorious fashion.

Imprisoned by her ropes, Frederica had no choice but to surrender to the blissful sensations that washed over her. Gaston rocked back and forth, settling deep in her then pulling out in long, delicious strokes that made her whimper for more. Leaning back, he grabbed a breast in one hand and steadied himself with the other. He contorted to lick her nipple, making a circle with his tongue then scraping his teeth over it.

This sent her over the edge. She screamed, and the world fell

away as her body convulsed and streams of ecstasy flowed through her. Images from their joyous day flashed through her mind—the glint of candlelight on the water, the look on Gaston’s face when he first saw her in her wedding dress, the sound of his words, “You’re mine.”

Then she realized he was saying those words to her now, at that precise moment. It wasn’t a figment of her mind, but a real occurrence. Forcing her eyes open she gazed up at him. He labored away on top of her, each thrust filling her with a happiness only he could bring her. She couldn’t touch him but at least she could feast her eyes on his muscular arms and shoulders as he completed the act.

“You will always be mine, Frederica.”

“Yes, my beloved master, I will. Thank you for taking me as your wife.”

He ground against her hips one last time before he stilled—out of breath, beads of sweat forming on his chest. He bent to kiss her then released her from her bindings, kissing each inch of skin before releasing her limbs.

Exhausted, she curled up into a ball and Gaston brought her some water. She drank thirstily and handed the flask back to him. He finished off the rest and crawled into bed behind her, curling his frame around hers.

“Thank you for becoming my wife.” Gaston murmured into her hair. “Not just any woman would have me.”

She hit his arm. “That’s ridiculous. I must be the most fortunate woman in the Caribbean, perhaps in the world, to have such a dashing and handsome pirate for a husband.”

“You think so? Even though he only has one eye and has been known, at times, to do incredibly stupid things?”

“You mean like...” she meant to say “have your woman sleep with three other men”, but he stopped her.

“Let’s not make a list.”

“Alright,” she said and snuggled her behind against his hips. He responded by moving closer and tightening his hold on her. Yes, their world was a dangerous one, but she felt safe and secure in Gaston’s arms.

His breathing slowed. He would be asleep soon, but she had one last thing to ask him. Nudging him with her elbow, she asked, “Gaston, what was it that Governor Whitehurst asked you to do?”

A loud snore filled the room, and she elbowed him again. “Gaston, Governor Whitehurst. What did he want?”

Drowsily, he stretched and said, “Humphrey. He wants us to go after Humphrey.” With that, he rolled over and fell asleep.

His words roused her attention and she gave him a shove in the back. “What does he want us to do to Humphrey?”

“Capture him,” he said and dozed off.

With a renewed energy, Frederica flopped onto her back. While her eyes fixed on the board ceiling of the cabin, she didn’t really see it. She began chewing on a fingernail, already planning and plotting the capture of her old nemesis.

What an adventure that would be. She couldn’t wait to get started.

The End

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More Stormy Night Books by Normandie Alleman

Daddy Morebucks

From the moment she laid eyes upon him, Marley knew in her heart that James was not just another client, and the difference wasn't even the large sum of money he offered in return for a single night of submission. No, what set him apart was the fact that when she called James "daddy", it was her own heart which beat faster and her own body which ached with need.

After that night, Marley does her best to put all thought of him behind her, using the huge payday he provided to get on her feet again and start over... until James knocks on her door and walks right back into her life. He makes her a simple offer: if she will live with him and submit to him whenever he wishes, he will provide for her every desire.

Even before she accepts his offer, Marley knows that what she truly wants is not money or clothing or even a fancy new car. What she longs for is a daddy who will give his little girl what she really needs... a daddy who will spank her bare bottom when she is naughty, tie her up and take her any way he pleases, and then cuddle her until she falls asleep in his arms. Can she dare to hope that James will be that daddy?

The Professor's Plaything

Twenty-one year old Colette Ellis has done plenty of daydreaming about Professor John McGill, but after a spur-of-the-moment decision to seduce him in his office turns her fantasies into reality, she is left longing for more.

She soon learns that this handsome academic can be as firm as he is passionate, and when her bratty behavior earns her a sound spanking she sees a side of him she never expected. Before she knows it, the beautiful young woman finds herself tied up at his mercy, naked, exposed, and more aroused than she could have ever imagined. As she grows closer to him, she cannot help but wonder how long this can last. Could John come to see her as more than just a naughty coed?

John has never fallen for a student... until now. There is something different about Colette, something that brings him alive in a way he has never felt before. Can he dare to hope that she is after more than just a fling?

Rescued by the Buccaneer

When Frederica Beauchamp boards a ship for the Americas, she dreams of a life filled with adventure, but she gets more than she bargained for when her passenger ship is attacked by pirates. The heartless men kidnap her and force her to serve their captain—a fate that might be worse than death, since though he does not have his way with her, the captain delights in baring her, shaming her, and thrashing her bare bottom as punishment for every imagined disobedience.

After the pirates bring aboard an injured man found floating in the sea, Frederica tends to his wounds and learns that he is Gaston Galette, a survivor of a shipwrecked vessel. Gaston seeks her help to overthrow the vile captain, but when their plan goes awry he is forced to use all of his wiles to save them. As the naïve girl and the seasoned sailor navigate one perilous situation after another, he informs Frederica that the only way they can survive is if he is in command, and that if she thinks things can be otherwise, she will be taken over his knee for a bare bottom spanking.

As he watches the proud, willful Frederica bow to his authority, however, Gaston worries that her growing hold on his heart will be his downfall. He knows he cannot take a woman with him when he returns to his ship and crew, but when Frederica accepts his lustful dominance completely, submitting to him with grace and beauty no other woman could match, Gaston realizes that he may never be able to let her go.

Daddy's Game

Sparks fly when up-and-coming artist Carmen Harris meets football star Natron Dakers at her first gallery opening. Carmen soon discovers that Natron is the type of man who sees what he wants and goes after it... and apparently what he wants is her. Almost before she knows it Carmen finds herself taking everything Natron gives her and begging for more, and when he reveals that he wants to be her dominant daddy and her to be his submissive little girl, she doesn't hesitate to agree.

At the top of his profession, Natron has money, fame, and all the perks that go with them, and now at last in Carmen he has found a woman he wants to share it with. His life feels complete... until in a split second everything comes crashing down when a devastating injury threatens to end his season—and maybe his career. Natron fears he will lose it all, but will he self-destruct or can he dig deep and fight hard for himself, his teammates, and his little girl?

Normandie Alleman Links

You can find author interviews, excerpts of upcoming books, and general thoughts from Normandie Alleman via her blog, her Twitter and Facebook pages, and her Amazon and Goodreads profiles, using the following links:

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Table of Contents

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[More Stormy Night Books by Normandie Alleman](#)

[Normandie Alleman Links](#)